The Studio Baby

Modeste Hannis Jordan

THE STUDIO BABY

AND SOME OTHER CHILDREN

"The editorial writer blew into the studio a kiss"

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AND SOME OTHER CHILDREN

BY

MODESTE HANNIS JORDAN

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THE STUDIO BABY

Little Mary had breakfasted, and sat in her high-chair with its curved shelf before her, that in time would serve as a tray for her dinner plate, but which now performed the single office of keeping Little Mary from falling out.

She kicked the under side of the shelf with her stubby little moccasined feet in a perfect ecstasy of delight, wriggled her little fat body, and pounded the upper part of the shelf with a rubber doll with an ivory ring in the top of its head. All of Little Mary's toys were of the noiseless kind; they neither rang nor rattled.

She cooed and gurgled, and nearly choked in her effort to express her joy, and then, failing to attract the attention that such conduct usually

elicited, she subsided, and her blue eyes were veiled with a soft light of adoration as they rested upon two figures at the far end of the studio, their young heads bent over a coffee-urn and a dish of eggs. Could Little Mary's rosy lips have formed words, two would have been wafted across the long studio,—mother and father. But as it was, the dignity of speech not having been attained, the rosy lips were pressed over the ivory ring, and the entire energy of the little body given to trying to annihilate the wonderful ring that never grew less in quantity, until a glance in her direction from the corner breakfast table aroused the ecstasy once more, and the stubby moccasined feet pounded upward harder than ever, and the gurgle changed to such screamings and crowings of joy that Little Mary was immediately caught to a ruffled bosom and her delighted outcries smothered in the softness there.

"You darling, you darling! Why *do* you make such a noise!"

Little Mary, not knowing that the smothering was a precautionary measure as well as a caress, screamed and crowed more loudly as she was released, and pulled the Van Dyck beard of the taller figure that now bent over her and between

"'Little Mary, do keep quiet, else we are ruined!'"

bursts of laughter begged: "Little Mary, Little Mary, do keep quiet, else we are ruined!" For how was Little Mary to know that she had been smuggled into a studio building where "Children and dogs are not allowed"? True, her baby mind was sometimes given over to wondering why she made daily excursions up and down long flights of stairs in utter darkness, being entirely hidden by a golf cape; but, then, mothers have queer ways of dealing with their babies, and Little Mary submitted to this treatment without so much as a faint wriggle to peep out from under the cape, and was rewarded always in a few moments by a burst of fresh air and sunshine as soon as they reached the pavement.

It was a big, tall building in the down-town part of the city where Little Mary had been installed,—once a family mansion, with tessellated marble hall, a wide stairway, with a heavy mahogany balustrade that swept upward in a graceful curve,—a house with "atmosphere" as well as many rooms, and under its roof dwelt men and women who wrote, men and women who painted, men and women who played and sang and taught, and a landlady who was proud of the

distinction of many of her tenants and uncompromisingly barred "dogs and children!" And why should she not, pray? Neither of these had she herself, and quiet must reign under her roof-tree,—her tenants insisted that it should. Indeed, as it was, she had often trouble in securing the perfect quiet required by many of them. For example, the lady who wrote books and plays, and the gentleman who wrote editorial paragraphs for a daily newspaper, insisted that they would quit their respective studios if Herr Bauermeister did not cease to practice upon his violin except between the hours of eight and ten in the morning, and Madame Villantti arrange for her vocal pupils to come between the hours of four and six in the afternoon, and never—no, never—after dinner, as the night hours were the ones most sacredly dedicated to the muse of the writer. But with diplomacy worthy a better post than presiding over a studio building (rooms at moderate prices), the good woman persuaded both the literary lady and the editorial writer that the floor one flight higher up was the best by all odds, for them (quiet guaranteed); so up they moved to the floor where, a few weeks later, Little Mary found herself at

home. Of course, dogs and children were not allowed. Pray, why should they be?

Eighteen months before there had been a dream-studio, but in all the dream-studio there was no corner fitted out for the occupancy of Little Mary. There was to be an easel, at which the tall figure with the Van Dyck beard should sit and paint until all the world should see and acclaim his genius, and a drawing-board where the soft, beruffled figure—that Little Mary was learning to adore more and more every day—was to work at "blacks-and-whites" for the best illustrated magazines in the country; and there were to be sketches galore scattered about over the walls, and a handsome rug or two spread over the floors, and a studio kettle for cosy afternoon teas, books to read sometimes, and a piano and a guitar for music to while away in ideal fashion long, delightful studio evenings; but in all that dream-studio there was no high-chair for Little Mary. Neither was there known in the dream-studio the joy-that-was-to-be—the music of the trilling of a thousand happy birds that sounded in the laughter of Little Mary, the dancing of a thousand golden sunbeams in the glance of her blue eyes.

Little Mary and the violets opened their eyes one April morning, and looking upon the sun-bathed world said it was good. In that quiet spot, away from the rush and hum and roar of the busy city, for a while, for just a little while, the dream-studio was forgot. But when the golden summer days were sped there came the consciousness that work awaited to be done in the busy town, though Little Mary laughed and cooed and treated it as an extravagant joke when she was shown a pocket-book that would not stand the strain of holidaying longer, and was prepared, after many serious consultations being held over her bright head, for her first trip to town.

The consultation had indeed been serious,—very. The Van Dyck beard had shaken his head and said it couldn't be done,—he knew it. But the beloved ruffled figure had been more hopeful,—it had seen practical ways and workable plans for doing the thing desired. Besides, Little Mary was so good,—so very good,—and so precious, that how could anybody— However, the Van Dyck beard continued to shake his head in a gloomy and foreboding manner. But at least they must go to town, of that he was sure.

Oh, that dear, big studio room with a fireplace,

long mirrors, with three "north-light" windows and one that opened toward the east, and a tiny annex where one might, surreptitiously, prepare a meal,—what a lucky find,—it was just the place! But dogs and babies were barred! Little Mary, however, never cried,—perhaps it was a safe venture— And it was made.

The day had begun happily with Little Mary. Through the narrow window to the east a shaft of sunlight fell and touched the arm of her high-chair. The rubber doll was forgot, again; the little moccasined feet kicked upward, there was a delicious coo and the chubby hands opened and shut in high glee, clasping the golden fairy-thing that danced back and forth, as the window-curtain slightly stirred, touching now her finger-tips and now just slipping away beyond their reach.

At the breakfast-table the two adored figures still sat and chatted.

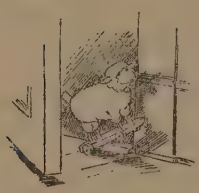
And there was the jolly jangle of a bell away off down-stairs somewhere, and the postman's whistle. Listen! The alert golden head was turned in the direction of these entrancing sounds. Then somebody calling up the stairs! The blue eyes of Little Mary were riveted on the door as the beloved ruffled

figure stepped out into the hall to answer the call that came floating upward, and leaned far over the balustrade to take the letters that the landlady was obligingly handing up from ten steps below. There was a delay, a moment's chat, and—oh, horror of horrors, the editorial writer was passing along the hall *and the studio door was wide open!* Too late! He had seen! So had Little Mary, and the moccasined feet began their dance of delight, the rubber doll was caught by one leg and pounded up and down; there was a coo and a wild scream of joy, vain of having attracted the attention of a passing stranger. The ruffled figure turned from the balustrade breathless, almost ready to disown its own darling offspring, when the editorial writer blew into the studio from the tips of his fingers a kiss, and then went on in stately fashion, never looking back.

The studio door was quickly slammed, a handful of letters fluttered over the floor,—which Little Mary, doubtless, took for white birds flying for her amusement,—and again she was caught to the soft ruffled bosom, this time to be told that she, by boldly attracting attention to her existence, had brought upon herself, as well as the other occupants of the studio, beyond a doubt

the dire misfortune of becoming homeless at a moment's notice. But Little Mary only tangled her fingers in the meshes of gold-brown hair that swept her face, and gloried in her recent conquest.

But that evening there was laid at the studio door a new rubber doll, and the next evening a white woolly sheep toppled in when the door was opened.



One morning the literary lady called, upon the kindly pretense of sharing a big bunch of roses, but she so very deliberately peeped behind a screen (Little Mary being no longer trusted with an unobstructed view of the hall), and held out her arms so promptly that suspicion immediately rested upon the real reason of her coming. "Sometimes I am baby hungry," was all she said as she cuddled Little Mary close, and allowed her to rumple her delicate linen collar in tugging at the pin of two blue enameled swallows that fastened it. The pin was unclasped and transferred to Little Mary's scalloped flannel sacque, where she promptly proceeded to look down at it in cross-eyed fashion.

And after that other toys were found at the door, and sometimes Little Mary saw the beloved

ruffled figure tiptoe up to the tall figure, as she whispered she believed she "heard the footsteps of two instead of one, stealing away from the studio door."

Little Mary noticed a very soft and gracious mood possessing the beloved ruffled figure, and also observed that the tall screen was put back in the place where it used to stand, allowing her once more full view of the door. And sometimes the door was left open, very cautiously, of course, and a glimpse of the treasure within was given those who went along the hall. Kisses were wafted to her and offerings were brought to her shrine. But if two met in the hall, each went sturdily upon his or her way, for what business was it of theirs to look in at a studio door that was not their own? And if there was a baby in that studio—why, then,—of course the fact must be reported. But none knew. Each, by his manner to the other, was ignorant of the fact. Herr Bauermeister was particularly brusque if by chance one happened to meet him a flight above his studio floor.

But there is no secret, howso'er guarded—

An irate landlady climbed the stairs one late

afternoon to the studio second-floor-back. The strictest rule of her house had been broken, for the first time, the very first time; and there were a dozen in league with those who had dared, *had dared,* right under her very nose, to carry on for weeks a thing that would ruin the reputation of her house! A child in her house, indeed!

"Taking the tiny garment in her hand, she went softly to the window."

The studio door stood slightly ajar. There was no response to her knock, so she pushed it a little wider open and entered. No one was within.

In the middle of the floor stood a basket of freshly laundered linen. The laundress had just made her weekly call and left the basket standing there, stripped of cover. A little starched white frock was uppermost. The landlady stared

at it blankly. Then she went on tiptoe and closed the studio door. Returning to the basket, she bent over it and touched with cautious finger a little sleeve, with frill about the wrist, that stood up boldly. Taking the tiny garment in her hand, she went softly to the window and in the fading twilight looked upon the fineness and daintiness of the handiwork. Then, going down the now almost dark stairway to a little back room on the ground floor, she took from a velvet-lined box, wrapped about by yards and yards of string, a tiny silver spoon with the imprint of two tiny baby teeth upon it, and stealthily groping her way back to the studio laid it on the shelf of the little high-chair.

Going out, she closed the studio door softly behind her.

THE PROPERTY BABY

The manager's anxiety was not so much concerning whether the S. P. C. C. would allow the baby to appear in the play as it was where to get the baby,—a baby as young as was needed, also as bright and as "cunning" as Miss Traville stipulated it should be.

Even among the poorest, he knew, motherhood would instinctively shrink from exposing a wee bit of humanity, "only just old enough to barely stand alone," to the draughts of the stage and wings at night, all Broadway gleaming white and crisp with ice and snow under the glare of electric lights in the height of the theatrical season.

Miss Traville doted upon realism on the stage. She avowed that an imitation anything threw a damper upon the most beautiful lines she might be attempting to render, while a real article—for example, say a white marble bench, if the scene be laid in an old Italian garden, instead of a white-painted wooden one—would make love passages flow from her lips like genuine poetry instead of haltingly and affectedly, always conscious as

she would be, of the woodenness of the bench upon which she surprised her lover dejectedly dreaming.

"It would spoil the whole thing to play to a dummy baby," declared Miss Traville emphatically. And though the playwright had wisely built his lines in such way that it was quite possible to make a "dummy" baby serve, still, the pathos and the tragedy of the play hovering about the appearance of a baby in the last act, everybody agreed with Miss Traville that a flesh-and-blood baby would add immeasurably to the scene.

Miss Traville, too, had an idea of how she would make the baby do certain cunning, baby-like things on the stage which would be sure to captivate the audience. (A star can afford not to be jealous of a "hit" by a baby!) The manager thoroughly appreciated the "heart-interest" value of a real baby, and was himself noted for his insistence that all properties should have about them as little of sham as possible. Indeed, he spent many long hours hunting through out-of-the way shops to secure a real "grandfather" clock, or a hammered-brass dinner gong, or a genuine Satsuma vase, or what not, as suitable accoutrements of any piece he might chance to be producing.

But the baby was to be something more than a mere property. It was to have a part,—Miss Traville designed that it should wave a handkerchief from the window and say "da-da" as its heartless father was turning away, and otherwise be very baby-winsome, thereby effecting a reconcilation.

A matronly-looking lady who did a "walking part" in the second act—herself the mother of six—said it never could be done; that a child never could be relied upon to do the thing wanted at the proper moment. And she added a bit scornfully, and talking somewhat aside and into the wings, that it was only because Miss Traville was very young and inexperienced that she expected to accomplish any such results from a baby, night after night.

The rehearsals went on successfully until there was no hitch or flaw, save the absence of a real baby. Several mothers had been found who would consent, for the generous sum offered, to allow their babies to appear for ten minutes nightly, provided they themselves might attend them to the very threshold of the stage. But Miss Traville, after inspecting these budgets of humanity,

pronounced them all "stupid, staring-eyed little things" and would have none of them.

There was, she insisted, somewhere to be found a baby who was wide-awake, alert and capable of playing the part allotted it, and that baby must be found.

Through never having had to relinquish a cherished plan, no matter how great or how small, Miss Traville either retained a childlike faith in the generosity of providence or else had acquired an idea that by sheer force of will all that she wished would come about. As the beautiful, gifted young actress was just at the height of her popularity, and as the management was bound to reap more than ample reward through her appearance in the house, time and patience were cheerfully expended and the quest for an acceptable baby continued.

The sixth little brown-skinned, round-eyed baby from the Italian quarter had been inspected and rejected, and the first dress rehearsal was moving on rather laggardly, when a flaxen-haired girl, in the ill-fitting but becoming red blouse that she would wear as one of the supernumeraries in the play, said timidly, and with a pretty German accent:

"Please, madame, but Jimmie has a baby."

"Jimmie!" Every one ejaculated the name at once.

Jimmie, otherwise "props." Why had Jimmie not been thought of before? Jimmie had never failed to furnish anything needed for the stage. There was no emergency, great or small, in the way of "props" that Jimmie had not been able to meet. It was remembered by a number then on the stage, especially by the chronic "supers" who had done "walking parts" and swelled the lists of "angry mobs" in the theater for a good many seasons, that once, when the very climax of the piece turned upon the overturning of a bowl of apples, that somebody had forgot to get, Jimmie upon the shortest sort of notice provided the most acceptable pippins, fashioning them from rolls of cotton, the red cambric strip of an American flag serving for their coats, pinned neatly on and toned down to a beautiful, blushing pink by the skillful smearing of white grease paint and talcum powder. But this was only an ordinary emergency feat of Jimmie's. There were others of greater moment. This one only chanced to be quite clearly recalled because the absence of the

apples had created such a panic behind the scenes at almost the last moment.

"Jimmie has a baby,—yes, madame," repeated the girl with flaxen hair and pretty accent, in the deferential tone usually employed by a supernumerary when addressing the star,—the wonderful leading lady.

Jimmie stood off in the wings, leaning against a profile garden pillar entwined with ivy.

Miss Traville approached him. Miss Traville had a voice that some enthusiastic young reporter in a western town had likened to "liquid silver." That she knew well how to use it might, perhaps, account for Fate's pliant hand in dealing out to her all for which she asked.

"You have a baby, Jimmie," she said, approaching him eagerly. "Won't you lend it to us?" The baby was "it" to Miss Traville. Youth is so eager, and success so dear! "Have its mother, Jimmie,—that's a dear,—bring it down, won't you?"

Jimmie shifted to the other foot and slid his hand up a little higher on the profile pillar. The stage manager stood a bit behind the radiant young actress. The others of the cast looked also in Jimmie's direction.

"Well, you see, ma'am, she ain't got any mother. (The child was "she" and not "it" to Jimmie,—his dear, little only daughter!) "Her mother," said Jimmie, and his alert eyes grew soft and tender, "died when she was born."

The stage manager and the others of the cast fell back a little. They remembered then the pretty Irish girl, always laughing, who had been a member of the chorus through a whole season's successful run of light opera in the theater. Jimmie's love affair had been their little jest. But Miss Traville held her ground. She moved closer to the man in shirt sleeves.

"Poor little girl!" she said in cooing tones. But there was design in Miss Traville's tenderness,—for youth is selfish, and success so dear! "But you'll bring her down, Jimmie? What is her name, Jimmie? Cathleen? Ah, that is a pretty name. I like the name of Cathleen." Then moving a little nearer and speaking still a little more persuasively:

"Don't you see, Jimmie, the piece cannot go on without a baby,—the right sort of a baby?"

Jimmie saw. He had the "right sort" of a baby. There was paternal pride in that thought, and he had seen so many turned away, disap-

proved by the beautiful Miss Traville. Then, besides, there burned within him the lure of the stage. Little Cathleen's mother, too, had nursed a faint hope deep in her heart, hungering much for a better part that she dreamed one day must surely come. Perhaps it was the will of Providence that little Cathleen should make her stage debut with the brilliant young actress, Miss Traville! Besides that, Jimmie had never failed to supply a "prop."

. . . . . .

Jimmie brought the baby himself to the theater next day, bundled in a great plaid shawl. The women of the cast took turns caring for her in the wings until Miss Traville arrived.

One glance at the child, then down on her knees before her went Miss Traville, while the pretty German girl held her snugly and comfortably ensconced in her plump arms. Miss Traville's knowledge of children was limited, but she knew at least that one must make friends with them at the outset if one is to be able to rule in the end. And Miss Traville never lost sight of the successful end. It was the goal toward which she reached.

Little Cathleen twisted her fingers in the bright

"Miss Traville knew then and there that the pact was sealed."

meshes of hair and tumbled Miss Traville's smart walking hat awry. Then she flung her arms about her neck, hugging her enthusiastically, and Miss Traville knew then and there that the pact was sealed. Standing up, she looked down upon the little Cathleen, considering her good points.

She was plump, fair, intelligent. There was something about her also that suggested that she was heroic. Her violet eyes were "put in with a sooty finger," as Miss Traville recalled had been said of the veritable Irish eye,—blue and as misty as violets with the dew on them, the long, dark lashes forming shadows as they swept the velvety cheeks. (Miss Traville herself had such eyes.) The chin of a child like this might quiver, on the verge of tears, but there would be a brave effort to keep from an outcry. Yes, she would do. In every particular she would do.

At first the rehearsals were a bit difficult. Jimmie brought little Cathleen to the wings, and then the stage manager resorted to the persuasive qualities of a stick of candy; little Cathleen was given just one aggravating taste of the delicious sweet, then it was handed over to Miss Traville, and thus was the temptation made complete.

Once successfully tricked upon the stage, the

part to be played at the window presented new difficulties. Little Cathleen invariably turned to gaze in the direction of the audience, the lights having been turned on to accustom her to the glare of the footlights.

It was the German girl who suggested that Jimmie take his place outside the window where little Cathleen was to play her important role. The effect was magical. Little Cathleen threw kisses, waved a handkerchief, and said "da-da" in the most approved fashion. Every one felt that the experiment was safe.

On the first night the curtain arose to great applause. At the end of the second act there was thundering acclaim and the curtain rose and fell, and rose and fell again.

An eager manager hovered about the star's dressing-room, and the woman within tried to remember that all of heaven was not beneath her feet. She knew that though much was won there were still heights to reach, else she would be a failure at last.

Before the end of the third act the audience was carried away. From pit to dome there was ringing applause. Little Cathleen could only be restrained from joining in the hand-clapping by

Miss Traville holding one of the pink palms against her cheek. While appearing only in the tender guise of motherhood to the audience, Miss Traville was in reality in a tense state of anxiety. "Oh, she must not do anything ridiculous now," she thought. "She has done it all so beautifully." Miss Traville hardly dared breathe until she could walk the length of the stage and hand the animated bundle into the waiting arms of Jimmie.

The press notices next morning were all that could be desired. The baby, as well as Miss Traville, had scored a "hit". The great actress smiled a little as she sipped her breakfast tea in bed, the newspapers spread out about her, to see that a baby shared her triumph.

The second night, and even more smoothly moved the performance. The critics had spared every one any harshness if they had not praised each one individually.

Little Cathleen's eyes were wondrously, unwontedly bright and the flush of her cheeks was a deep rose. This Miss Traville noticed as she held her to the window, put a handkerchief in her hand and whispered to her the usual command: "Say 'da-da.'" For the first time the little flushed cheek against her own caused her a pleasurable

thrill. Before, in the excitement of wishing all to go well, the child had been to her merely an adjunct contributing to the success of the piece, merely a property baby. Now she became an individual, a mortal, thrilling to the call of life, playing her part in a great drama,—the drama of a man's and a woman's heart, of a home, of society, symbolic of the very thing upon which society at its best rested! There was a new meaning in the concluding lines. The aim of the dramatist had been caught. Miss Traville felt as she rendered them that she must fling out over the footlights to her audience the new, the better meaning. How could she have

"There was a new meaning in the concluding lines."

missed it up to now? There was an exultant ring in her voice, and her listeners were swayed.

A little stir outside the star's dressing-room, a hurrying to and fro. Miss Traville, her unbound hair in the hands of her maid, sprang up and threw a violet-colored flannel robe over her bare shoulders as a sharp, insistent knock sounded.

"The door, Annette," she commanded.

The maid started quickly. Before she could cross the room Jimmie entered, little Cathleen in his arms,—little Cathleen white and still as the stillness and whiteness of death, the girl with the pretty German accent at his heels.

"*Ach, das arme niedliche Kind!*" the girl exclaimed over and over again, clasping her hands tightly.

"She's sick, ma'am," was all Jimmie said, an awful tenseness about the lines of his mouth, the pleading of a hunted dumb animal in his eyes.

Miss Traville looked upon the pale face, the dark, down-sweeping lashes.

"Run," she commanded, stretching out her arms for the child,—"a tub of warm water,—of *hot* water, Jimmie. And you—you, little girl of the flaxen braids,—to the drug store for a package of

mustard,—quick! And you," nodding to a frightened face in the background, "to the nearest doctor. Tell them not to shut off the heat in the theater,—to keep it going until ordered otherwise."

"I once had a little sister—" Miss Traville began reminiscently, and then broke off, holding the little body close to her beneath her warm robe as the tiny feet and hands twitched convulsively.

The hot bath of water and mustard appeared in the twinkling of an eye. Miss Traville stripped the wee child, and banished all save Jimmie, the maid, and the girl with flaxen braids from the room. The chilled little body began in a few moments to take on a faint pink glow. Lifting her from the bath, Miss Traville snatched from a nearby chair a rose-tinted kimono, exquisitely embroidered and of the softest and warmest woollen fabric, wrapping it about the child and nestling her closer and closer.

The doctor came, glanced the cuddled little bundle over casually, pronounced it merely an acute attack of indigestion, already overcome, said everything necessary to be done had been done, and leaving some tiny bits of white powders to be administered at intervals hurried away to join his after-theater supper guests.

Another tall man, muffled in a fur-lined overcoat, pushed past the doorkeeper in the dim light. Challenged with the laconic question, "You another doctor?" he merely asked to be shown to Miss Traville's room, to the green-room, or any other room where Miss Traville could be seen.

"Them's aginst me orders," said the doorkeeper stoutly.

"But, well,—ah, you see, my man, you see I *must*. It's very urgent. Don't keep me here waiting. If you knew how long I had waited—" this last somewhat under his breath, slipping at the moment a bill with a yellow back into the man's hand.

The man then pointed a thumb over his shoulder. "But it's aginst me strictest orders," he reiterated. Folding up the bill to put it in his pocket, he determined that if any unpleasantness arose from admitting the stranger he would give as an excuse that "in all the excitement over the kid how was a man to know who was a doctor and who wasn't?"

The direction indicated might have led to a green-room or an inferno, so dark was the labyrinthal way. A shaft of light streaming out from a half-open door emboldened the man to

wander in that direction. Coming directly before it, he glanced in.

On the threshold he paused. A woman in violet-colored robe, with hair falling in bright confusion about her shoulders, gazed down upon a tender little flushed face that rested against her bosom. A tiny hand had slipped out of the pink folds of its wrappings and found its way to rest against a beautifully rounded throat. A pair of innocent blue eyes looked up confidingly into the Madonna-like face that bent above. A half-tremulous, half-happy baby laugh rippled out. Jimmie, standing breathlessly near, sprang a step forward, then stood mute and motionless. Miss Traville caught the child to her and nestled the warm little body beneath her chin, saying "Sh, sh!" which was a warning to every one to keep still, while she swayed a little back and forth, crooning a low lullaby.

The man at the threshold had swept the room with a swift glance, and, noting the anxiety written upon the faces of the little group, defined something amiss.

Softly on tiptoe he crossed the room. Bending over Miss Traville, he drew her bright head against the encircling hollow of his arm.

"Elaine," he said, "Elaine I have traveled

across the continent to see your ambition fulfilled. I watched you last night,—but I hadn't the courage. You still seemed to me cold and far away. But I came again to-night. I could not go away without seeing you once more. And, somehow, before the curtain went down I felt that at last you would understand. Tell me, Elaine, do you not now know that there is something better,—something greater in life than the world's acclaim?

Miss Traville lifted her eyes shining with tears.

"There is a greater thing, Melvin, and its name is love!"

Jimmie and Annette and the girl with the flaxen braids had withdrawn to the far corner of the star's dressing room.

"*Ach, das arme niedliche Kind!*" said the girl, still wearing part of her make-up and the ill-fitting but becoming red blouse.

And Jimmie, looking at her intently, remembered that little Cathleen needed a mother, and this, indeed, was a very sweet, sympathetic girl.

THE
REFORMATION OF VALENTINE

THE REFORMATION OF VALENTINE

Mrs. McGonigle gave the little bright blue trousers a vigorous tug at the waistband as she attempted the feat of making buttonhole and button meet.

"Dese are buful buttons, I fink, Gonnie," came the observant remark through a shock of copper-colored curls that fell down over the rounded cheeks, growing very red from the position of the child, his body being bent almost double as he examined the shining, bullet-like buttons at either side of his knees.

Mrs. McGonigle gave the waistband another tug.

"And if ye don't stand up, me lad, howiver in the wurruld am I to button ye?"

The plump little figure straightened, shaking back the curls to reveal a pair of lake-blue eyes, a plump though almost oval face, with a rosebud of a mouth that was just a bit wistful in lines, though a smile seemed ever to lurk about the corners.

"Thim's sure foine, me darlint!" pronounced Mrs. McGonigle. "Thim's *beautiful* breeches!"

Little Valentine raised his eyes to the genial face above him and thrust his hands deep down in the diminutive pockets.

"I'm most a man, now, Gonnie," said he.

"Sure and ye are, me lamb," replied Mrs. McGonigle. "And ye auntie won't be afther knowing ye, that she won't. She's coming expecting to foind a baby and she'll foind a man, sure and she will."

As Mrs. McGonigle talked she was busy drawing over the curly head a faded, outgrown dress, the sleeves of which stopped somewhat short of the dimpled wrist.

"This is ye Roosian blouse," said Mrs. McGonigle, as clumsy thumb and finger closed the last button down the back.

But Valentine's eyes were riveted on the nether garment. It was his first pair of trousers. Mrs. McGonigle had gone a number of blocks up-town the night before, to "the Avenue," to purchase them. Her pocket-book did not allow of an extravagant expenditure, but what the little garment lacked in excellence of quality was made up for in resplendence of brass buttons about the knees.

The smartly dressed small boys on the north

side of the Square wore blouses and knickerbockers; but there is a difference in the affluence of the north and south sides of the Square if not in the radiance of childhood, and though Mrs. McGonigle deemed the fashions set by the north side as well worth following, the little blue shoddy trousers and the outgrown, faded dress were the nearest approach she could make to the popular style of blouse and "knickers."

"And I'm betting ye didn't say ye prayers this morning."

Mrs. McGonigle leant back in her chair, folded her hands and looked questioningly, if indulgently, at the droll little figure before her.

Promptly down on his knees went Valentine, lifting his tiny hands, finger-tips touching.

"Hail-Mary-full-er-grace," he hurried on, as though to make amends for his neglect. He paused.

"Who's 'Mary-full-er-grace,' Gonnie?" he asked.

Mrs. McGonigle sat with eyes closed and head reverently bowed and did not answer.

Pleading for the blessing of saints and the forgiveness of sinners, Valentine hastened. Then again the tiny hand waved the sign of the cross and the child stood up.

"Who's 'Mary-full-er-grace,' Gonnie?" he repeated, a hand laid confidingly on each of Mrs. McGonigle's knees.

"Bless the lamb!" she exclaimed, throwing a

" 'Who's "Mary-full-er-grace," Gonnie?' "

strong arm about the little shoulders and drawing the child closer to her side until the curly head rested against her comfortable bosom. "Mary is our blessed Lady—the mother of our Lord".

"Of our Lord," the child repeated musingly, "the muvver of our Lord? Our Lord up in heaven, Gonnie?"

Mrs. McGonigle nooded.

"Our Lord's muvver—up in heaven. My muvver is in heaven, Gonnie."

"Oh, me darlint, me blessed lamb!" Mrs. McGonigle cried, drawing the child closer to her. A tear welled in her eye and flowed over. The child brushed it away with his velvety hand.

"Don't cry, Gonnie," he murmured soothingly. "Don't cry."

"And it is yesilf that should be shedding the tears. The blessing of all the saints be on ye, ye little comforter!" said Mrs. McGonigle. "Ye was born to comfort. The blessing of the saints be on ye!"

Mrs. McGonigle's benediction was not ended when, glancing up, she saw the tall figure of a young man standing in the doorway, a young man who stooped a little as though from the burden of pain, and leant a bit upon a cane. He smiled leniently upon the pair before him, a smile just such as that which lurked about the rosebud mouth of the child, and held out a hand. The boy went toward him with both hands outstretched. He

knew that it was the hour for their walk, and he also understood that it was to be the last walk that they would have together for many days to come.

Mrs. McGonigle watched them as they went across the Square and passed from sight through the great arch, the quaint little figure marching steadily beside the tall one, both unconscious of the oddity of the apparel of the small boy who, as she noted, raised first one chubby leg and then the other, calling attention to the button-trimmed trousers.

Then Mrs. McGonigle turned to the task of putting to rights the studio and the sunless little bedchamber adjoining it. For a number of years Mrs. McGonigle had had charge of the building, a family mansion in its decline, divided into small suites of rooms, occupied for the most part by artists of varying degrees of fame and income. There was but one child in the building, little Valentine, who had opened his eyes upon the world in the midst of the heterogeneousness of an artist's workshop.

"And such a place!" his great-aunt Abigail had exclaimed several weeks before to her closest friend and sister member of the Ladies Aid and

Sewing Societies upon her return from a visit to her nephew, at which time arrangements were made for the transportation, very soon, of Valentine to the home of his great-aunt for an indefinite stay,—until his father's health was sufficiently restored to resume the care of him.

"And it is really the work of the Lord," piously added the austere lady, sitting beneath the portrait of one of her Puritan ancestors, "that I shall have the care of the child while he is still young enough to be benefited by religious training. Not only was he given that heathenish name by his poor foolish mother,—she was an actress, you know, and it was not with my consent that my nephew married her,—indeed, I had far different plans for him,—but there he is in the midst of idols and other outlandish trash, picked up goodness only knows where. And, worse than that, there is the influence of an uncouth person who teaches him to say his prayers, and I found him in the act of *making the sign of the cross* as he knelt down in the morning!"

At this the lady visitor raised her eyebrows significantly and appreciatively.

"And the child's only doll was a heathen image!"

And how could either lady, shocked at this reflection, understand that the first great moral lesson, a moral lesson that would last him through life, had been impressed upon the little Valentine when his father held the tri-headed image of Buddha in his hand, and, calling the child's attention to the three poses,—hands covering ears, hands covering eyes, hands covering mouth,—had taught him to lisp after him: "Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil"?

Of course Mrs. McGonigle did not know that Valentine's great-aunt Abigail did not approve of his religious instruction. Like her censor, though, she also disapproved of the "hathen images," as she called them, scattered at random about the studio, and did what she could to counteract their possible evil influence upon the wee child. The morning and evening prayers she looked upon as the most efficacious remedy against this. For a year or more her heart had yearned over the motherless boy, and, too, over his father.

"The light's gone out o' him," she said to herself time and time again, as she watched the threatened illness become a verity, a foe not longer to be lightly treated. And when by chance, or, as it almost seemed to her, in answer to prayer,

there came a fellow artist, an old friend of boyhood days upon whom fame and fortune had tended, urging him for a visit across seas to sunny southern France, Mrs. McGonigle could hardly restrain herself for very gladness.

"But me little lamb, and whativer will ye do with him? And it's mesilf that would be blessing the dear Lord if me hands warn't too full to take the care of him."

"There is a way in which I think I can provide for his care until my return, Mrs. McGonigle," the young man replied, and as soon as she had left the room, after tiptoeing once more to the chamber door to make sure that the child slept soundly, the man put forth writing materials upon the table to carry out the plan he had but intimated to her.

There was a hurt, though, down deep in his heart at the thought of asking his aunt Abigail to do the favor for him. Only desperation drove him to it, he knew. Pride must be stifled to do it at all. But a fight must be made for the future and little Valentine. If it were only for himself,—oh, it did not seem to matter much for himself. He was very tired, that was all. Anything that would bring rest, in no matter what form it

should come, would be welcome. It had all seemed such a failure. The doctor said change would make life seem once more worth the living. Could that be possible? It hardly seemed so.

His aunt Abigail had resented his marriage. She would even resent it more did she know the whole truth; but that she never should.

From a locked drawer of the table the man drew a piece of folded paper. On it were only a few lines, and the writing was small and even:

This, then, is good-bye. It is for the best. The child is more yours than mine. He is so good and patient. He has your eyes, your smile. Forgive me,—I could not stand it,—the dullness, the monotony, the hardships. I long,—long for the old place, the praise, the applause. Do not try to find me. I shall change my name. This, then, is good-bye.

Then there was a clipping from a newspaper, not yet yellowed by time, that told of a railroad accident. The man's eyes went blind with the dimness of unshed tears. It had all ended so suddenly! The horror of that beautiful, animate body, that lover of sunshine and gaiety, mute and still forever! A thousand times he had blamed himself. It must have been his fault that suc-

cess did not come. He idled away, he was afraid, those first happy months when he should have worked. She could not bear it when her lovely gowns grew shabby, when her gay friends fell off, when there was nothing to live for but work. The cares of motherhood should not have been hers. At first she loved the child with passion, but soon his baby ways wearied her, his exactions tugged at her hatefully.

Of the farewell letter his aunt Abigail did not know. Only the railroad accident, of the sudden ending of the young life had she been told. The secret was his to keep.

Over and over the man read the letter and the newspaper clipping, as though to imprint upon his memory forever the words of both; then, tearing them into tiny bits, he went to the grate and laid them carefully within it. Striking a match he lighted the little pyre and stood to watch it burn. Returning to the table he wrote.

Mrs. McGonigle had hardly finished putting the studio to rights when a ring of the front door-bell summoned her. Pushing aside the dusty lace that hung before the glass panels, she peeped forth to discover some one whom she knew to be the

kinswoman of her friends of the "first floor" studio. If Mrs. McGonigle murmured something that would not have been construed as complimentary had the lady on the opposite side of the portal heard it, it was all due to the fact that nothing short of a beautiful angel would have been thought quite good enough by her to bear the little Valentine away from her devoted care. And Valentine's great-aunt Abigail was not up to the standard of angels, as Mrs. McGonigle was accustomed to seeing them pictured in her illustrated prayer-book, and in the various studios under her auspices. But with marked politeness she led the way for the visitor, who followed closely upon her heels bearing her prim and uncompromising looking black hand-bag.

A glance about the studio revealed the fact that its tenants were out. Mrs. McGonigle explained that they would soon return. The lady, stiffly sitting upon the edge of a dusty velvet-covered chair, assured her that it was her hope that she would not have to wait long. And from that moment Mrs. McGonigle fluttered about the front door somewhat nervously.

The wait proved not long. There was an added paleness when the young man, holding the smiling

little Valentine by the hand, came into the room and greeted the visitor. As his aunt announced that she had but little time to spare and wished to take the next train back home, the moment for separation was already at hand.

Mrs. McGonigle had made the preparations for departure. The few little clothes had already been packed in a pasteboard box and fastened by a shawl strap. Around the child's shoulders she pinned a small shawl of red and green plaid, fringed about the edges,—an article supplied from her own wardrobe,—which served in place of a top coat to protect against the breezes, that were apt to be chilly when the sun slipped under the clouds, as it was at the moment doing.

"We have had our good-bye," the young man said, as his aunt arose and stood as if expectant and fully fortified and proof against a "scene." And then he went from the room.

"Good-bye, Gonnie," said Valentine, as he turned to Mrs. McGonigle, standing as still as a statue, her arms folded over her capacious bosom in the muteness of her grief.

She knelt down beside the child, folded her arms about him and buried her face against his shoulder.

"Don't cry, Gonnie," he soothed, without a tremor of voice; and taking one corner of the gay little plaid shawl he brushed away her tears. Disengaging himself gently from her protecting arms, he turned to his waiting great-aunt, slipped his hand in hers and without another word went from the studio. Valentine had been fortified for this moment when walking with his father, and he knew it was only *sans adieu* to the beloved studio. Into the hired carriage, which still waited at the door, he clambered, never once looking back, but keeping his gaze bent toward the north side of the Square.

The occupants of the carriage remained silent as they wheeled toward the station. Valentine's great-aunt sat bolt upright and regarded with something akin to wonderment the brave little figure before her. It had been a long time since she had had any intimate acquaintance with a child, but in all that she had heard and all that she could remember concerning children there was nothing that hinted at the possibility of the self-possession of the wee boy who sat before her. He had, with just the faintest sort of a sigh, settled directly in the middle of the seat, his hands folded in his lap. It did not occur to the lady

that there might lurk within the small body something of the same spirit that possessed certain of their ancient and common ancestors and sent them martyrs to the stake, without ever a word of complaining, because of their conviction that what they did, or what they believed, was right. It did not occur to her that atavism had anything to do with the composure, the stoicism, of little Valentine.

. . . . . .

Valentine sat on a straight, high-backed chair while his great-aunt bent over the canopied bedstead unpacking his box of clothes. It was the room, she had told him, that was occupied by his father when a little boy, and later, when he was a young man, after he had begun to paint pictures, before he went to foreign lands to travel and then to live in the city. There were a good many pictures about the walls, some crude drawings and others the excellence of which revealed the genius of the more mature artist. Valentine looked upon the pictures as one might upon old friends. They suggested home to him, home where his father was, always at home among pictures. He could not fancy his father as at home anywhere else. It was perfectly natural, therefore, that he should find his room filled with pictures. Over the

mantelpiece there was the portrait of a girl,—a girl who looked straight down at him.

"I've seen her before," mentally observed Valentine. "My faver has painted her picture in our studio, too. I fink she must be a very nice girl," he continued musingly.

Then Valentine, composure and dignity vanished, bounded from his chair and fairly flung himself upon his great-aunt, tripping over her skirts and dashing against the side of the bed, to snatch from her hand a parcel which the lady was unwrapping from many folds of newspaper, the while wearing a puzzled expression.

"My dolly, my darling dolly!" Valentine exclaimed, kissing the tri-headed image of Buddha passionately and holding it to him.

"Your dolly?" questioned his great-aunt, looking at him over the tops of her spectacles. "That is a bad, hideous object to have for a doll. Give it here. I'll put it away somewhere and get you a real dolly, if you must have one."

"Oh, no, no!" cried the child, shrinking away. "This is a buful dolly. I love him. See?" And he laid a trembling hand, half restraining and half coaxing, upon his great-aunt's wrist and drew

her down to look the more closely at the inscription at the base of the image.

"He is a good dolly,—my faver teached me what he says. See? 'Hear no evul, see no evul, speak no evul.' That is what my dolly tells me. My faver says that he says that to me every day and I must listen and remember."

Perhaps it was the touch of the tender, warm little hand on her wrist, perhaps it was the child's pleading eyes, so like another boy's that she so well remembered, that caused his great-aunt to say gently:

"Well, we'll put him on the mantelpiece and he may stay there where you can see him."

Valentine yielded to the compromise, and his darling was removed from his clinging arms and installed upon the more chilly resting-place of the white-painted wooden mantel.

When his great aunt had finished putting his clothes away she told him that it was noontime, and that he might go down-stairs with her and play in the garden while she prepared luncheon.

"And, my child," she added, "while you are here I shall call you William. That was your grandfather's name and is your father's, and

should have been yours instead of the foolish name that you bear,—Valentine."

"Willum?" the child said a little questioningly, and then repeated over and over, as though to learn it, "Willum."

"But I am Valentine because I *was* a Valentine,—my faver says my muvver called me Valentine because I came to her out of the sunshine on St. Valentine's Day. Gonnie knows all about the saints, and she says St. Valentine was——"

"Yes, I know," interrupted his great-aunt hastily. "But I shall call you William while you are here."

Valentine slipped his hand in his great-aunt's, as she turned to leave the room and motioned to him to follow. This was a confiding little habit that he had. His father and Mrs. McGonigle never walked without holding his hand when he was beside them.

Going down the stairway he whispered softly to himself, over and over, "Willum." By the time the lower hall was reached he had grown accustomed to his change of name, and the thought of the garden then drove everything else from his little brain.

What a wonderful thing a garden must be! He had never seen one,—only in pictures. And through a back door Valentine stepped into a world of wonder. There were flowers, flowers everywhere. There were wee, sweet flowers growing close to the ground, and great bright flowers growing on tall, straight stalks. It did not occur to him to pluck any of them. He walked among them with reverence, inhaling lightly the perfume of this one or that, and then he sat down, all in a little heap, on the brick border of a bed of pansies. "Heart's-ease!" he murmured ecstatically. The little faces looked up at him in a familiar, friendly sort of way. He had never seen those flowers anywhere, he thought, not even in pictures. Only on Gonnie's Sunday bonnet. And Gonnie called them "heart's-ease." Those growing in the bed were so soft and sweet. He wished Gonnie

"'Heart's-ease!' he murmured ecstatically."

could see them. And Valentine brushed a light, caressing hand over the purple blossoms.

Hardly, it seemed to him, had he spent a moment with his pansy friends, so companionable with their cunning little faces, when his great-aunt called him in to take his place at the table. He perched upon the great calfskin-covered book that had been placed in his chair to make it high enough, and at her end of the table his great-aunt bowed her head to ask the blessing. Promptly at the bowing of her head, Valentine waved his little hand before his face in the sacred sign that Mrs. McGonigle had taught him when he sometimes breakfasted with her in her kitchen, and which his father had smiled at, but never objected to, at meal times in their studio. At the end of the meal he again followed Mrs. McGonigle's teaching in the matter, but his great-aunt laid a restraining hand upon his and said firmly:

"I do not wish you to do that again, my child."

Valentine looked at her with wonder in his blue eyes. He did not understand, but he slid down from his chair without asking a question. His father had instructed him that he must be obedient to his great-aunt and do nothing to displease her.

Evidently his own little blessing had displeased her. He was sorry.

The long afternoon sped happily away in the garden, still wonderland up to the hour that the sun went down. There was a butterfly with brown and gold wings, a bee, a toad, many blossoms and fluttering boughs, just as the pictures in the studio showed them, and even a little better to look at, since they moved, danced, hopped and fluttered and swayed with the impulse of life. The pansies were little people, and back to them Valentine kept turning to tell them of all his adventures,—of the flight of the butterfly across the garden fence to the wood beyond, of the toad that went down deep in a hole in the ground,—such a funny little toad. Wasn't it a wonder that he did not want to be in the sunshine, but would rather go in a hole?

Tired little legs bore the child to his room that night, where his great-aunt helped him to undress, and at her knee he repeated a strange prayer, as she told him she wanted him to learn a new one.

Valentine, with no thought of being afraid of the dark, was left alone. But he could not sleep. For so long nightly he had clasped in his arms the beloved "dolly," which now rested upon the

cold and comfortless mantelpiece. It did not occur to him that there might be relief in tears. He only stared, wide-eyed, into the dark.

Below stairs his great-aunt had gone to the bookcase and opened the doors with green baize curtains within the glass. From a far corner of a lower shelf she drew two yellowed and much worn little books,—"The Longer Catechism" and "The Shorter Catechism." Bound about these by a length of tape were a number of picture cards of unfaded colors. At the bottom of each of them in the white space were written a name, a date and a "remark": "Awarded for prompt attendance at Sunday-school"; "For learning in their order the books of the Bible," and so on. Consecutive numbers of the "Westminster Quarterly," covering several years, were among the treasures.

Valentine's great-aunt spread these out before her on the mahogany center-table, where a shaded lamp stood. The years were not so many since she had put them away, and yet a very, very long time it had seemed to her. Her married life had been brief and no child had come to bless her. Her dead sister's son, however, had filled in a great measure the void. But, strong-willed as she was, she had met a stronger will and in the end he had had

his own way. That it had not been productive of happiness she believed. Over and over the pages of the little catechisms were turned, the picture cards scanned. Then they were carefully gathered together and placed at one side of the table. The morrow would be the Sabbath. Valentine's great-aunt thought of it as the Sabbath. Sunday was a word she did not use. It seemed less reverential to her. The morrow would be the Sabbath, and, of course, a fitting time to begin the proper religious training of the wee boy who had come under her care. His father, in his boyhood, should be held up to him as an example, and his father's possessions put into his hand as an inspiration, an incentive. The poor child had been unfortunate in his early training, and its effects must now be eradicated as effectually and as speedily as possible.

At the thought of her wee charge and the responsibilities that had come to her, Valentine's great-aunt tiptoed up to his chamber door.

Valentine had stared wide-eyed into the dark until an inspiration had come to him. Then he slipped from the bed, his noiseless little feet touching the bare floor where the rug did not reach as he groped about. At length his hand touched it,—

the high, straight chair. Cautiously moving this toward the mantel Valentine climbed upon it, and, descending, brought the image silently with him. Placing it on the floor behind him he knelt, hands upraised and finger-tips touching, and repeated the bedtime prayer of Mrs. McGonigle's choice.

Near the doorway his great-aunt stood. The lisping little voice, pleading all alone in the dark for a blessing from heaven and for guardian angels to watch beside his bed, stirred her heart strangely and she had to swallow hard to keep from making a sound that might have been a sob, so very near were tears.

Creeping beneath the covers with his long-time companion hugged close to his breast, contentment settled upon the child and soon his even breathing told his great-aunt that he was happily in dreamland.

The sun seemed up ever so high the next morning when he awoke. It was hardly so light as that at midday in the studio, he reflected.

The shock of bronze curls was wildly disarranged, but that part of his toilet Valentine was quite accustomed to let go until the hour that best

suited Mrs. McGonigle's convenience. He had advanced to that stage of self-care where he could get into his own clothes if some one would only "button him down the back." So the few little garments were awkwardly donned, and, half timidly, he crept into the strange upper hall. To the stairway he slowly went, then his tiny hand was on the balustrade as one hesitating step was taken. Then another faltering step, pondering the while upon the probable customs of the household at that hour of the day. Would his great-aunt be up? Would there be breakfast somewhere for him? Valentine had never been scolded for a late morning appearance, therefore no foreboding rested heavily upon his heart.

The silence below was broken. The door-bell had been rung and there were footsteps going toward it. How bright the lower hall looked in the flood of sunshine that streamed in!

"Well, Mary, child!" his great-aunt exclaimed in pleasant tones, as she flung the door wide open and more golden sunshine rushed in. "You are out early this morning."

The somebody answered.

It was early then. Valentine peered further over the balustrade.

"Mary," he repeated,—"Mary!" "Mary" had come from somewhere to see his great-aunt. "Mary," the child mused on, as he slid his hand along the railing, descending slowly. The name conjured up to him all lovely things. Mrs. McGonigle had told him of Mary who was queen of the skies, of Mary full of grace, of Mary whose heart yearned over all little boys because once she had a Son of her own. "Mary," he whispered, as he reached the lower step.

And there stood the very girl who looked down at him from above the mantel in his room, the picture his father a long time ago had painted, the girl whose picture again his father had painted and had left half finished on the easel in the studio!

Mary turned as the sound of timid approaching footsteps reached her. Mary as fresh as the morning, Mary in a blue gingham gown, Mary with hair like the sunshine! Valentine hesitated, his hand on the newel-post.

"Oh, oh——" and Mary caught her breath. "You beautiful,—you beautiful,—you darling baby boy!"

Valentine's little unbuttoned garments had

slipped down and left one shoulder bare. He smiled upon Mary with a slow, mysterious smile.

Mary was down beside him on her knees, unheeding Valentine's great-aunt, who raised a finger to her lips to silence Mary's flattery.

"Oh, you darling,—you beautiful baby boy!" again Mary cried, cuddling the child close to her. Again he smiled on her with the slow, mysterious smile, a smile that she remembered, with eyes that she had never forgotten.

"'Are you my muvver come from heaven?'"

"Mary-full-er-grace," the wee boy half whispered, and nestled his cheek against hers.

"Are you my muvver come from heaven?" he said aloud, one soft, warm palm laid against her cheek.

He had never known the loving arms of a young woman, none other than his mother's, and in Mary's arms there was such a completeness of rest

that there awoke an only half-remembered and undefined something.

Mary did not answer, but held him the closer. His great-aunt cleared her throat a little before she said rather sternly, turning away:

"Val— William, come with me to the dining-room. Your breakfast is waiting."

The child started obediently to follow, slipping his hand after his old habit into Mary's.

Together they stood for a moment in the hall-way before the door that had been left wide open. One glance over the brick walk, and Valentine rushed down the steps, clutching his little unsecured garments with one hand as he ran to keep them from falling about his feet.

A tall man had entered the gate, and in his wake there came a stout figure resplendent in brown worsted dress, a green and black plaid shawl and bonnet with very purple pansies, now flanked on either side by a brave red rose.

The tall man stooped and laid a hand upon the tangled curls.

"I did not need the sunshine of France, my son," he said. "I needed only you and—and—heart's-ease."

Instantly Valentine's thought reverted to the

flower-bed in the back yard full of heart's-ease, and to Mrs. McGonigle's Sunday bonnet.

Mrs. McGonigle said nothing, but clasped one fluttering little hand, the other held fast by his father. She wiped her eyes with a very white handkerchief, folded three-cornered wise and redolent of cologne, as they walked toward the house.

In the doorway stood Mary, her hands tight-clasped. She had not guessed that the meeting would, after the years, make her heart stir so wildly. Often she had told herself that now it would not matter.

"This is Mary,—Mary, Gonnie," said the child, telling Mrs. McGonigle first. Of course it would mean most to Mrs. McGonigle to know that he had found Mary,—Mary who was so lovely in Mrs. McGonigle's eyes. Mrs. McGonigle must care a very great deal to know Mary, who had come from the somewhere to see his great-aunt.

"This is my muvver come from heaven, faver," he continued. "I asked her if she was my muvver and she did not say she was not. I know she is my muvver come from heaven, cause I 'member my muvver's blue dress. She is going home wif you and me and Gonnie and never, never, never leave us."

"The blessing of all the saints be on ye! The saints be praised! And to hear him talk like an angel. The blessing of the saints be on ye!" said Mrs. McGonigle.

And before the blessing of the saints pronounced by Mrs. McGonigle upon the threshold—the threshold founded by the Puritan Northfields—was ended, Valentine's great-aunt came from the dining-room. But she stretched out her hands to the wanderer, who for many a day had not been beneath the old roof-tree, and as he folded her in his arms, for the first time in his life she bowed her head upon his shoulder. Standing again in a moment erect and composed, she held out her hand.

"My child, your breakfast is waiting."

After the old confiding habit, Valentine slipped his hand in his great-aunt's and went with her toward the dining-room.

THE MOTHER O'DREAMS

THE MOTHER O'DREAMS

Miss Perkins, the assistant matron of the Orphans' Home, sent her bright scissors snipping through the tangle of dark curls, not viciously but uncompromisingly, as Miss Perkins had snipped locks for a number of years from an almost unremembered number of young heads. Then the towel was removed from the little girl's shoulders, and she stood up, cropped, in the "shingled" fashion prescribed for the sake of convenience and cleanliness by the Board of Lady Managers, a brief cotton petticoat with a wide hem and a plain under-waist covering her all too slender little body. Miss Perkins picked up from a chair a new blue-and-white checked gingham apron, long-sleeved and high-necked, and held it before the child. An older girl buttoned it down the back. Thus was the outward transformation of Marie Antoinette effected.

Marie Antoinette was the "new girl." As such she was the center of interest. Other little shingled-heads had peeped in at the door while the

transformation proceeded, and grinning little faces did not reveal any sympathy. Perhaps, rather, an impish delight might have been detected. For had not they themselves been thus shorn, and why

"Grinning little faces did not reveal any sympathy."

should the new girl be allowed the vanity of tossing beribboned curls?

A giggle from the doorway and Miss Perkins turned in that direction, lifting her chin a trifle to bring it around over the edge of her stiff-

starched linen collar. The grinning little faces disappeared and scampering feet, unsuccessfully trying to muffle their sound, stampeded down the long, bare hall.

Soon Marie Antoinette joined the herd, all alike as so many timid mavericks, save for the more or less racial casts of features.

Marie Antoinette was welcomed with subdued glee. Now she was one of them, reduced to the ranks. During the few past days that she had been a resident of the Home there had been an inward smouldering of envy, if not of jealousy. Marie Antoinette's silky, dark curls were undeniably lovely, and the red ribbon bow that topped them was an allurement to the primmest and most tried-out little orphan in the long dormitory when she tied it, independent of mirror, so deftly in the morning. Marie Antoinette had also worn a very fetching frock of white-and-black checks, edged all about with red. These departures had only been allowed to exist because of the fact that Miss Perkins was unusually busy and had not "got around" to the new girl. The initiated knew this. Nevertheless there were moments when they wondered if it could possibly be favoritism. It was known that Marie Antoinette was the protégé

of Miss Edith Leighton. At least, Miss Leighton had brought her to the Home in her own carriage.

When Marie Antoinette joined her companions there was no sign that she was in the least unduly conscious of her lost glory, no sign that her heart beat high while her spirits drooped, no sign that, like the peafowl, she longed to hide away in some remote corner until nature should again richly endow her. This self-poised attitude for a moment nonplussed the other little shingled-heads that were drawn together, a gossipy conclave, whispering, anticipating the entry among them of the new girl, now outfitted to conform to the prescribed pattern.

As Marie Antoinette left Miss Perkins's hands and went down the long, bare hallway in the direction of the play-room to which she had been directed,—it being Saturday afternoon,—she put her hands with an almost startled gesture to her head. About her ears and at the back of her neck there was such an unusual coolness as to seem uncanny. Before reaching the play-room pride, however, had banished heart-thrills. It mounted high ere she had crossed the threshold and was her shield and buckler.

"What shall we play, girls?" Marie Antoinette

asked, nonchalantly, as she almost skipped into the room.

The little shingled-heads drew back a trifle and clustered even a bit closer together. They gazed at her to see if they had heard aright. They had just finished calling her a "proudy" and "stuck-up," and were fully prepared to see her somewhat crestfallen when she came again among them. But there was the same brisk nodding of the small, shapely head. It had not been the curls, then, altogether, that had set her apart, made her different from the rest of them! She had not lost caste in the replacing of the festive little frock by the serviceable gingham apron. And from that moment Marie Antoinette was their chief, their commander, designed by some right of nature,—they did not know what,—to rule,—their ring-leader.

The new girl was a wonder!

Marie Antoinette was not her real name. She did not, however, admit this to her playmates. They might surmise it if they wished. She would not confirm any suspicion to the contrary. Upon the books her name was entered more prosaically as "Anna," and the matron and the school-teacher called her that. But her associates thought rather

well of Marie Antoinette and used it without curtailment. Had they known that it was inspired by a story-book in which a certain little girl met with all sorts of wonderful adventures, that would not have deterred them in the least. Marie Antoinette had stimulated their imagination to the point of intoxication, and they were willing to accept any fiat from her.

"What shall we play, girls?" again Marie Antoinette asked, and each felt that a command rather than a question had been put to her.

"Let's tell stories," lisped a round-faced, fair girl.

"*Oui, oui!*" exclaimed another with animation, lapsing into a mother tongue put aside for the past six months and all but forgotten.

"We, we!" the others shouted, laughing derisively.

"*Ja, ja!*" said the little German girl broadly, entering into the spirit of the fun.

They all went to a long bench at the back of the room, arms twined about one another's waists. Marie Antoinette had already established herself as a prime story-teller. She knew that it was now expected that she should be the entertainer and rather welcomed the opportunity. It was

relief from the sadness and the rebellion that lurked, undefined, in her little bosom.

Marie Antoinette's stories appealed especially to just such an audience as was hers. She had come from the very heart of the city where "wonderful things" happened; the Home was located in the leafy suburbs of the great town. Marie Antoinette's stories were recitals, chiefly, of the beautiful existence led by her friend "Lucile," who had a beautiful mother, who bought her beautiful clothes and took her riding every afternoon behind a pair of the most beautiful horses in the world, and shopped with her in the most beautiful of shops. There were ice-cream sodas innumerable interspersed, but always and ever it was about the beautiful mother of "Lucile" that the story lingered long and lovingly.

Mothers were wonderful things. The little shingled-heads guessed this, many of them not remembering any mother of their own whatsoever. Marie Antoinette only vaguely remembered hers. Miss Leighton had rescued her from an overburdened aunt, where Marie Antoinette's rosebud mouth only meant one more to feed. All together in the chapel at twilight-time the little shingled-

heads bowed and sang solemnly, in unison, their evening prayer-song:

> "Softly now the light of day,
> Fades upon our sight away.
> Free from care and labor free,
> Lord, we come to worship Thee."

But there was no individual knee at which to repeat: "Now I lay me down to sleep." So Marie Antoinette's stories about a model mother were followed breathlessly. If by their telling she sowed discontent, this she did not know. But it was pleasant to be "looked up to" as a personage who had such a fortunate friend with such a beautiful, such an ideal *mother*.

So popular was Marie Antoinette's story of "Lucile" and her mother that there was not enough spare time during the day to rehearse it. The long dormitory of the smaller girls came to know the innovation of nightgown parties. Miss Perkins made her last round at nine o'clock to see that every one was safely a-bed. At that hour she found that every one was. But later, especially when the moon was shining through the window, there were long and delightful moments of hushed whispering. In time, a disturbed sort of current must

have reached the inner consciousness of Miss Perkins, for one night, in kimono and with front hair in curl-papers, she entered the dormitory, pushing open noiselessly the door that had been most stealthily shut fast, and detected the culprit seated on the floor in a far corner, her satellites grouped about her, all squatting back on their heels,—a little huddled group, bathed in the radiance of the moonlight. No manner of protest would have availed. None was attempted. Marie Antoinette was led to a little room at the end of the hall, furnished with one narrow bed, a straight chair and a small table, and the key turned in the lock. There, for infringement of rules, she remained the next day in solitary confinement. And it was "pie day," at that! Her midday meal, though, did not comprise pie. Sympathetic little shingled-heads hovered as near the door as they dared during the day, and one or two even prostrated themselves flat in whispering a word of comfort under the crack of the door before they scampered away. But there was no response from the other side.

There was a telltale somewhere, and during these lonely hours the traitor in camp had a chance to shine forth brilliantly. It was thereby revealed

that not only had Marie Antoinette told entrancing stories in and out of season, but to the forbidden "clothes room" she had led her admirers one day, and there, arrayed in trailing skirts, "lady dresses" (garments donated by society women for remodeling), she had been the ring-leader in that most delightful illusion,—"playing mother!"

All of this having been divulged, it was decided to bring Marie Antoinette from the little room to the chapel in the evening, where the matron, in the course of her usual close-of-day remarks, commented severely upon the wickedness of lying and of deceiving "those in authority," citing instances of the dire calamities that had befallen those, in days of old, who had been so guilty and froward. The loyal little shingled-heads would have refrained, if they could, from turning in the direction of Marie Antoinette, but that was beyond the possibilities of alert, animated childhood.

Marie Antoinette was the target of all eyes. She had been made an example of. The boys on their side of the room, just as well as the girls, knew the whole unhappy affair. It had been the sensation, the talk of the day. After the evening service Miss Perkins herself escorted Marie Antoinette up the stairway, this time to the dormitory, for a

heavy charge had been laid upon her heart and she was "put upon her honor" to stay in her bed.

But there is not let or hinderance to dreams. In happy ways the fancy of Marie Antoinette traveled. "Lucile" and her mother had become, from the over and over telling, very real, and now, as the tired and emotion-spent little body reposed, a beautiful, an ideal mother bent down and promised her all the love and comfort for which her hungry little heart yearned.

Very softly the other girls, a little later, crept into the dormitory and to their beds. It seemed so lonesome. There was but one, the traitor, who was not sorry, and she was sad and a bit frightened, to say nothing of the uncomfortable feeling of knowing herself shunned. Marie Antoinette did not awaken. The night before had been sleepless. Besides that, she had been branded a wilful teller of untruths, a wilful breaker of rules, a wilful defier of authority. There was wearisomeness, then, of spirit as well as body. The shaft of reproach had sunk deep.

"Say, but the new girl's sure in trouble," said a wee mite of a lass, with just the suspicion of a lilt of Hibernian brogue, as she slipped in a new stiff unbleached and unlaundered muslin night-

gown. Only a nod in the dim light that came in from the hall answered her, for Miss Perkins had just appeared at the door, faithful to her duty and purposely a little in advance of the usual time.

The crickets were still chirruping in the dry grass and the katydids had not hushed their song when the last little shingled-head sought its pillow.

The Lady Managers sat in conclave at their regular monthly meeting. The problems of how to provide food and shelter for their philanthropically assumed charges had been discussed pro and con, ways and means devised, various endowments and donations recounted and made note of.

Miss Leighton was one of the wealthiest and most active members of the Board of Lady Managers. It was, therefore, a little more than an ordinarily serious matter to know just what disposition to make of an especial protégé confided by her to the Home just before her sailing for Europe. (The ladies always spoke of the asylum as a Home, spelled with a capital H, of course.) Both the matron and assistant matron had reported that they believed Anna, self-styled Marie Antoinette, while in many ways a most fascinating and lovable child, was a menace to the morals and good behavior of

the other children, since she possessed an imagination that would not be curbed and was the inventor of dreadful—— Well, it almost seemed to be too harsh a word for the Lady Managers to repeat. Of course, something must be done, but what?

The home of the president of the Board was childless. Her only daughter was far away, the wife of a zealous young missionary to Egypt. It may, though, have been the recollection of this daughter, the stirring of a lonely heart, that caused the president to offer to take under her own wing and "discipline," for a time at least, the little unwanted Marie Antoinette.

That was just the thing. Every one of the other ladies breathed a sigh of relief. Therefore, at the conclusion of the meeting of the Board of Lady Managers, Marie Antoinette found herself once more returning to the heart of the big town. She wore again her checked dress with red trimmings, but her hat seemed too big and sat oddly upon her head without the clustering dark curls. In the dormitory, where she arrayed herself for the journey, the other girls stood off in respectful silence, or timidly proffered her some assistance. Here again was the new girl most fortunate. No doubt she was going to where just such an ideal

mother as she had so often described awaited her. Certainly she was going to a home of wealth,—or so their childish wits devised.

Marie Antoinette said good-bye with a tugging at her heart-strings. Many there were, she realized, who had been her friends and had stood loyal to her. But there stirred in the depths of her soul, above everything else, the fancy, long-stored, that somehow she might be going forth to find, for her very own, the mother-o'dreams!

Order prevailed in Mrs. Weston's home. Servants came and went light-footed upon the velvety carpets. When Marie Antoinette awoke in her little room, all white and pink, she was surprised to find still upon the chair her black-and-white checked dress with red trimmings. Once she had thought this fine. Now she would not have been at all surprised to discover hanging in its place a frock of sheer white embroidery and lace, with large pink bows, such as "Lucile" always wore. And where was the mother-o' dreams? Why did she not come to kiss her good morning and hold her in her arms? Waiting a while, and realizing all this was not yet to be, Marie Antoinette slipped into her black-and-white checked frock. Listening

in the hallway for some sound of stirring below stairs, the rattling of dishes encouraged her to descend. Following the sound, she was led to the dining-room. Soon breakfast was served. The servants had not paid much attention to her as she slipped in. Mrs. Weston, coming into the great room presently, seemed surprised to see her about so early and without being called. She laid her hand kindly on her head, but did not kiss her. Marie Antoinette ate her breakfast in silence, save for Mrs. Weston's suggestion that milk was better than coffee for little girls. The maid removed the coffee cup then and replaced it with a glass of milk. After breakfast there was a drive in the park behind a beautiful pair of horses, but when Marie Antoinette put out her hand timidly to touch that of the lady sitting beside her, she hesitated and did not do it.

Every day went on in much the same fashion. Oh, where was the beautiful mother-o' dreams? Would she never come?

Marie Antoinette had books to read, but they were all about gentle little girls who were never naughty. Mrs. Weston had brought them down from a bookcase in an unused room, next to Marie Antoinette's, dusted them off, and told her that

once her own little girl had read them. Marie Antoinette looked at Mrs. Weston in surprise. She had, then, once upon a time, a little girl of her own!

There were new frocks made for Marie Antoinette, fashioned by a seamstress hired by the day. But they did not seem to "feel just right." At any rate, they were not the airy frocks of embroidery and lace, diked with pink ribbons, such as "Lucile" always wore,—such as a certain mother-o' dreams would provide! It was a wonder that these did not materialize! There was so much else all about like that which "Lucile" had. But then there was not the mother-o' dreams.

Day by day the disappointment became keener and keener and the heart-emptiness grew to be almost a pain. Then Marie Antoinette's head began to ache.

One night Marie Antoinette heard Mrs. Weston discussing with a visitor in her sitting-room the problem of what to do with the child, whether to return her to the Home or not, as the season was approaching when everybody went away from town. Marie Antoinette's head reeled, and she seemed slipping far, far away. She came back from the far, far away in a little while and crept

silently away to bed. The next day she found she did not care for anything, and she did not want to get up. Often she slipped far, far away, and in those still moments the mother-o' dreams came to her and told her she was so sorry that she was feeling ill. Suddenly she found that the pink and white room had faded away, and that she was in an upper room, all very bare and white, and that a doctor came and went, and a somebody, a woman, dressed in white, with a white cap and white apron, gave her little white pills to swallow. Yes, it was all very, very white, everything about her.

"Marie Antoinette's head reeled."

One day the bright sun was streaming in through the window—the sun had never appeared so bright before, it dazzled her eyes, when she heard a far-off voice say: "Yes, she will live. Children have wonderful recuperative powers, as a rule. It has

been a hard fight. The child is sensitive and high-strung, and has been under nourished." Then came the mother-o'dreams. Her hair was fair and clustered about a low, broad brow, just as "Lucile's" mother's hair did. She held Marie Antoinette to her, kissed her over and over again, and while tears rained down her cheeks declared strangely:

"Yes, little one, I am your mother. I will be to you as 'really, truly' a mother as it is possible for me to be. I will keep and hold you dear always. Do not beg again,—never any more. I have heard your little lonely heart's cry. God has sent you, maybe, to be my own little girl." For however was Marie Antoinette to know that in the weeks that the fever burned and she wavered and wandered in the strange fields of delirium, calling always to the mother-o' dreams, that from the far-away country of the Nile had come Mrs. Weston's daughter, who was the wife of the missionary, and who had, almost in the shadow of the temple of Karnak, laid her own little dark-eyed girl?

LINDY'S SAM

LINDY'S SAM

The frogs croaked dismally under the reeds in the marshy hollow, the moon was half veiled in mist, and the live oaks, with their swaying pall of gray moss, flung big, restless dark shadows against the little whitewashed cabin the night Lindy's Sam was born.

Mammy Rachel, unwinding a bit of black and white checked shawl, revealed a mite of ebony humanity and laid it across her knees before the fitful light of pine knots that burned on the cabin hearth.

An owl, flying by on its night-quest, hooted dismally and, attracted by the light from the cabin window, darted heavily against the pane. Mammy Rachel glanced up furtively, muttering, "A bird er ill-omen, a bird er ill-omen," and wrapped the tiny sleeping infant in the scrap of checked shawl.

"I ain't never see it fail yit," she mused, holding the child close to her and swaying back and forth to insure its going completely to dreamland. "I knows de sign, an' I ain't never see it fail yit.

Dis chile am *sho* gifted wif second-sight. My ole Missus tole me dat years an' years ago, an' I knows de sign. Her folks in North Ca'liner ware Scotch, an' in *dat* country, my ole Missus say, de sign never fail, when a chile's born wif a veil over hes face. An' I ain't never see it fail in *dis* country, nuther."

The old woman, nurse and seeress always in her community, crossed the room to a high-posted, rickety bed in one corner and deposited the round little bundle beside its mother. There was no sign of special interest as Mammy Rachel laid the sleeping child down upon the bed.

Not liking the stoical indifference with which her charge was regarded, she moved the child a little nearer to his mother.

"Whatcher gwine call him?" she demanded.

"Sam," laconically answered the woman.

"Huh!" the old woman ejaculated, "the name er his pa."

This was uttered somewhat scornfully, the show of sentiment not being wholly pleasing to Mammy Rachel. Sam senior had disappeared from the neighborhood some time previous, fallen from grace through lapses of honesty, with consequences that boded him ill if he remained in the vicinity.

"'Taint no matter whose name 'tis," said the mother, somewhat spiritedly, drawing the bundle at last closer to her and peering into the little smudge of a face. For a few moments she gazed intently, and then encircled the bundle with her arm.

Mammy Rachel, apparently satisfied, returned to her chair beside the fire, muttering:

"De chile am sho gifted wif second-sight. I ain't never see it fail yit. An' dat's a gif' er de Lawd, what gives dem what's got it power ter see inter de future!"

The wind rose and chanted in monotone about the cabin. Mammy Rachel nodded in her chair, and the last and most vigorous of the pine knots burned itself into white ashes.

In a soap-box behind the kitchen stove lay Lindy's Sam. He blinked his round, china-like eyes, and again kept them closed for hours while his mother whisked brown loaves of bread and steaming, sweet-smelling puddings from the oven.

His one little garment, of very pink calico, drawn and held about his neck by a string, had

slits cut at the sides through which two tiny chubby arms, as brown and as smooth as a satiny chestnut, found freedom.

Up from the cabin to the big house every morning journeyed Lindy's Sam in a basket, and back again in the evening in the same way. But on a folded-up piece of patchwork quilt, in the soap-box behind the stove, he was least in the way during the day.

At first the box was tucked almost entirely out of sight behind the big stove, but day by day it was brought a little farther forward into the kitchen, as the round, china-like eyes grew more expressive, the chubby little arms learned to fling themselves in glee, and the smile that curved the funny little mouth matured and became a very audible gurgle,—for it is hard to resist a baby's laugh.

But soon it came about that Lindy's Sam could sit alone. Then the piece of patchwork quilt was spread on the kitchen floor, or upon the back porch, or on the ground beneath the great spreading tree at the low kitchen door-step, and Lindy's Sam was provided with his first toy,—a marrow-bone, tied about his neck with a string, quite as good as

the best of ivory rings for the helping through of a little first tooth.

The little white tooth came through, but nobody especially rejoiced. And finally a whole row of shining little white teeth flashed, but nobody particularly noticed that; and Lindy's Sam was the lonesomest baby that ever sat through all a long day upon a patchwork quilt. He soon learned that the edge of the quilt was the boundary over which he might not creep.

No playfellow came his way. No romping child to trick and tease him. Not even a kitten whose tail he might pull and win devotion thereby, after the manner of kittens toward children. It is true that the big hunting dogs—sometimes let loose from their kennel, divided from the kitchen yard by a high picket fence—would frisk about him, but their rough frolic frightened him and he would shrink away from them in sheer terror.

The big house was always quiet. Death had robbed the place of its elderly mistress not long before the advent of Lindy's Sam. The young mistress installed desired quiet, so no guests came and went. The young master found his chief recreation in hunting, the baying of the hounds

being music to his ears as it was terror to the heart of Lindy's Sam.

"It's de gif' er second-sight. Dat chile ain't 'thout reason fer bein' feared er dogs. Pick him up, Lindy, an' fotch him in de kitchen," said Mammy Rachel one day when on an errand to the big house, noticing the child's look of intense fear as the dogs, just let loose, were running gaily about the horses' hoofs, ready to break into a chorus of yelps and howls at the blowing of their master's hunting-horn.

"Don't you never try ter git him usen to nothin' he's feared of. Fotch him in heah."

The woman obeyed.

"I wonder why he ain't walkin', Mammy," she said as she put him down on the white pine floor.

"Ain't dat chile a-walkin' yit?" the old woman exclaimed, standing akimbo and looking down on the round woolly little head.

"Not yit. He jest sot aroun', an' sot aroun'."

"Kin he talk?"

"He kin say mos' anything, but when I stands him up he jest sots down agin."

"Han' him heah."

Mammy Rachel bared the little back and limbs, felt the joints and manipulated them. Readjust-

ing his one brief garment, a bright red cotton slip, she gave the child to his mother.

"He ain't never goin' ter walk," she announced oracularly, "not in one laig."

For a moment the young woman stared at the old woman uncomprehendingly, and then a wonderful thing happened. For the first time she held the tiny, round little body to her close and closer, as though she would never again let it go, swaying back and forth and moaning:

"O Lawd! O Lawd!—de han' er de Lawd is laid heavy upon me cause I didn't rejice in de comin' er dis chile,—cause I call him a burden,—cause I call him a burden. O Lawd, O Lawd!"

As she continued her moaning, Mammy Rachel tried to comfort her.

"Didn't rejice in de comin' er dat chile? Call him a burden? Didn't I tell you de fust night dat chile come he ware gifted wif second-sight? Ain't dat 'nuf fer any woman? Hush yo' lamintations, gal. It's mos' always lameness, er blin'ness, er somethin' wif chillum wif second-sight. But it don't make no difference ef a chile is lame what's gifted dat way. Dey always gits along."

Somewhat comforted, the mother put the child down on the floor again. And little Sam knew

from that moment he would be less lonely, less in the way. Had Mammy Rachel known of the wordless joy that thrilled his small being she would have called it "second-sight"; which might have been as good an explanation as to ascribe it to instinct.

Truly it was a wonderful day for Lindy's Sam. The kitchen fire growing hotter and hotter, he was carried to his old place on the shady porch, there to while away his time as best he might playing with the leaves that fell from the hop vines that clustered thick. Somewhere at the other end of the porch boxes were being unpacked. From one box, bigger than the rest, there came a thing that gleamed like gold in the sunlight. Cleared of its many tissue-paper wrappings it stood at last wholly revealed,—a shell-shaped cradle, all gilt and ivory, fit for a fairy princeling, and destined to receive the little heir-apparent of the big house.

Lindy stepped from her kitchen door to look on. Between her and the little figure on the patchwork quilt there floated a vision all in filmy white, a woman who clasped her hands in delight as she beheld the fairy cradle. For one moment she gazed thus lovingly upon it, and then, swayed by all

tenderness, she bent above the wee child at her feet, exclaiming softly:

"Lindy's Sam!"

The child laughed in glee at the sound of his name and stretched up his little brown arms.

"Lindy! Lindy, pick him up and hand him to me!"

The mother, not sure she had heard aright, obeyed mechanically.

Perhaps the child thought he had suddenly been caught up by an angel. He gazed with wide but unafraid eyes.

"How heavy—how splendid he is!" said the vision, holding him closer.

"Yes'm," said the mother, taking him in her arms and putting him on the floor. "But he ain't never goin' to walk."

"Never going to walk? Lindy, Lindy, what are you saying? What do you mean? Of course he is going to walk. God would not be so unkind as to send a child into the world and say he shall not walk!"

But Lindy shook her head sadly.

"Mammy Rachel say he'll never walk,—not wif one laig, Miss Lucy."

The vision stooped and laid a slim white hand upon the little round black head.

"Then he shall have, when he is big enough, a crutch all gold and ivory, like my— like the little cradle there."

The vision, with a sob, stepped through the long French window back into the room shaded dim from the white sunlight without and fragrant with the breath of roses.

Lindy's Sam resumed his picking up of vagrant leaves, and Lindy went back to her kitchen, turning around in the oven the pies to brown them evenly on all sides.

"A gole crutch wif iv'ry," she pondered, "a gole crutch wif iv'ry! Mammy Rachel say a chile wif second-sight's boun' ter git along."

Lindy's Sam had a playfellow, chubby of body and sturdy of limb. He also had a crutch of polished wood, with much gilt and tipped with ivory. Time had brought him these things.

If there was something of incongruity between the elegance of the crutch and the ragged dress of the small boy who carried it, his lord and master and boon companion noticed it not.

The ragged, rolled-up trousers of Lindy's Sam,

the faded cotton shirt and one suspender strap of torn bed-ticking, the straw hat with but half a crown, were habiliments quite worthy a nobleman in the eyes of Teddy, monarch of all he surveyed, ruler, yet loyal ally of Sam.

Nimbly the one small bare brown foot and the gilt and ivory-tipped crutch traveled miles and miles in the wake of vigorous Teddy. There were no more lonesome days. There was joy in service.

When Teddy, his fair curls moist about his brow, slept, Lindy's Sam sat untiringly near, waving a fan, his own small face narrow and wistful and seeming years instead of months older than his self-assumed charge.

But there were lonesome nights. When the big house was closed, and Teddy had hung out of an upper window to call good-night until he had been pulled back and the curtains drawn, then the frogs beneath the weeds in the marshy hollow would croak, the little screech owls would wake up, and Lindy's Sam would sit alone in the cabin door until the full moon was just overhead. Lindy, often returning late from a social visit in the neighborhood, would find him so, and a weird little shiver would possess her, remembering the gift of "second-sight," and she would say abruptly:

"Git up frum there, chile. Why ain't you in bed like other chillum, 'stead er moonin' aroun'."

Sam had grown too accustomed to this combined question and reproach to make answer, and, pulling from beneath his mother's high-posted bedstead a mattress of straw, would, sans the labor of undressing, lie down, the gilt and ivory crutch within reach of his hand.

There were those of the neighborhood who said that Lindy's Sam, while his mother slept, might often be seen riding through the air on the golden crutch, to hob-nob with the powers of darkness that are visible and communicative to those who have "second-sight," and that, young as he was, he had "de sperit er prophesy!" But these things were not repeated to Lindy, out of consideration for what must, naturally, be sensitiveness upon the part of one who had borne a child with "second-sight." But had Lindy been shrewder, she might easily have set herself up as a priestess among them, repeating oracles ascribed to the lips of her child.

"Don't you get skeered down in your 'ittle house at night, sometimes?" Teddy would ask, peering into Sam's wise little face.

"Skeered er what?" Lindy's Sam would answer.

"Oh, of fings," Teddy would promptly say.

"No, I ain't skeered er nothin',—nothin' 'cept dogs," Lindy's Sam would announce with emphasis.

Then brave, blustering Teddy would rejoin, puffing out his chest :

"Oh, I ain't afraid of dogs. When I am a man I am going to have more dogs'n my papa, — big dogs, as high—as high as that," holding a wee hand above his head.

"'Don't you get skeered?'"

"Some night I'm coming down to your 'ittle house," he continued.

"Oh, no, you mustn't," cautioned Sam, apprehensively. "C a u s e — cause things might git you."

"I fought you said you wasn't afraid of fings," reminded Teddy.

"Oh, but you are, an' you might git skeered."

. . . . . .

The moon hung lazily in the sky, wakeful crickets chirped in the dry grass, and for once the frogs in the marshy hollow were still.

Lindy's Sam sat in the cabin door in his accustomed place, his head resting against the door frame, his crutch leaning against the step.

That day some one had told him for the first time about his gift of "second-sight." He did not know what that meant. But it was explained to him that, for one thing, he could see ghosts.

"O Lawd," Lindy's Sam was praying as the moon sailed from behind a fleecy cloud and shone with fair, full face over the open stretch of field before him, "O Lawd, won't you let me see a ghost? I won't be skeered. I ain't skeered er nothin' 'cept——"

Something was coming over the field. Closer and closer it came, a little flying figure in white. On it came, now quite near, and there was a wild scream of terror, then a dog's low, savage growl, repeated again and again. Another scream. On it came. Teddy, Teddy in his night-gown,—at his heels the great watch-dog!

One comprehending glance and Lindy's Sam darted forward crying:

"Run, Teddy! Run inter the cabin an' shut the door!"

The child made a quick swing into the path to do as directed. On came the dog in close pursuit. Teddy could hardly make it. Lindy's Sam rushed forward, now between them. Squarely and unexpectedly he met the great beast. The impact knocked the frail little body to the ground. The dog, startled at the unexpected obstacle in his way, turned and fled barking over the field. The kennel woke up and the hounds bayed noisily.

From the big house came those who had been alarmed. On the hard-beaten path that led to the cabin they stumbled over a small, dark object,—Lindy's Sam! Beside the cabin door, twenty yards distant, was the gilt and ivory crutch. Very tenderly they put it away. No more would a little brown hand clasp the handle.

And to this day, down by Bayou Teche, it is told how one night God gave wings to the feet of Lindy's Sam.

HIS RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

HIS RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

"Not a word, boys, not a word," and James Curtis waved his hand with a gesture of finality. "I'll talk to you on business topics—you know that—almost any time when I think there's anything to interest your public, but I claim the privilege of keeping my own private, personal, family matters out of print."

"But, Mr. Curtis," ventured the youngest of the three reporters who had finally, through reportorial persistence, gained admission to the private office of the financier, "it is rumored that you mean to have the marriage annulled, as your son is not of age."

At this the man at the great flat-topped polished mahogany desk winced. He wheeled about in his chair, picked up his pen, and shaking his head repeated a little absently:

"Not a word, boys, not a word."

The reporters stood for a moment in a row, silently gazing at the back view of the broad, angular shoulders of one of the great men of the bank-

ing world of the day. Then they put up their pencils and filed out. Each one of them at some previous time had been dismissed just in this way when James Curtis had "nothing to say."

"Good guessers, or mind-readers, those chaps," said the man of affairs, laying down the pen and glancing up with a tired, troubled look in his deep-set eyes.

"I suppose they'll be busy in ten minutes writing for their respective papers that—that I'm going out to see about annulling the boy's marriage. Well, that's just exactly what I'm going to do, but as yet I haven't taken the public or anyone else into my confidence. No doubt he's been badly duped—the lad. To his mother, of course, the fact that she's a dressmaker's daughter is enough, but it's what kind of a woman the dressmaker is that I'll soon find out. Adventuresses are not unknown quantities out in the wide Western section of our land-of-the-free-and-home-of-the-brave.

"It's tough— I'll own it is, at best. I don't blame his mother for being all broken up about it. I did want him to finish at Harvard—had my heart set on it. And, then, there's Anne Carter—"

Curtis vigorously pushed an electric button at the side of his desk. He swept together some

papers and handed them to the boy who answered his ring. As silently, he pointed toward the closet where his hat and street coat were hung. The boy brought them forth, and helped him to change coats.

All day the office had been on tiptoe, every man in it feeling the atmosphere charged with currents of human intensity, and not a man or boy but felt sorry for the "old man." Of course, they had read the Associated Press dispatch in the morning papers.

"Old man's hard hit," observed the bookkeeper without looking up, as his employer passed through the room and closed the outer door behind him with a snap. Nobody added any comment, and the late afternoon routine of the office moved on as usual.

"Anne Carter," mused Curtis as he went along the street, passed the doors of Old Trinity, and down to the subway,—"I suppose she's been with Lucy to-day. She said she'd 'phone for her at once."

With the thought of Anne Carter came the breath of something cool and fragrant. Anne Carter, with her small, shapely head with its glorious crown of chestnut hair, her slender neck,

her gracious yet always reserved manner. Whenever she came floating in, always in a white dress—it seemed to Curtis that he could never associate Anne Carter with anything but white dresses and violets,—he would own to himself in an undefined way that it was good just to have Anne Carter about. And Lucy he knew had looked forward for years to the day when she could call Anne Carter daughter. Of course, there was no formal engagement existing between Anne and the boy, but it was one of those things understood between the two families, and most agreeable to both. He wondered how Anne would "take it."

Anne was not wearing white, but it was some light thing, and Curtis was surprised to find her as cool and fragrant and unruffled as ever—no trace of tears about her eyes—in Lucy's boudoir, reading aloud in her low pleasant voice to the older woman, who reclined on a couch with a handkerchief thrown over her eyes.

Curtis paused outside the door for a moment, and then, as neither had seen him, decided he would not intrude. It was a delicate situation any way, and in certain circumstances women could manage best without men; and this seemed one of those times when a man was a superfluity.

In his room he took from his pocket the telegram, and re-read it:

Married yesterday. Await reply before coming home.

DON.

Whom he had married, and at what hotel in Colorado Springs he was stopping, the morning paper had disclosed.

Curtis rang for his personal servant and instructed the man to pack his traveling bag, order the car for nine-thirty that evening and attend him to the station, though he would make the western trip alone. Presently he heard Anne Carter go from the house.

Though Lucy greeted him with a deep sigh, all traces of tears had gone from her eyes. He stooped and kissed her, and patted her hand tenderly. Their sweethearting days had never come to an end, and indignation at red-hot heat arose in Curtis' breast at the thought of any one disappointing Lucy or blasting any of her fond hopes. Of course, Anne Carter wouldn't have Don now, but those scheming, designing women shouldn't, that was certain. To think of such as they foisting themselves on Lucy so that she would be compelled to accept them socially, intimately!

The boy wasn't of age. He'd have the marriage annulled, that's what he would do! In five or six years he would have seen the folly of it all and would thank him. He'd give the women money,—oh, yes, he'd give them a good, round sum of money, and that was, no doubt, all they'd inveigled the boy into marriage for. The girl, no doubt, would be entirely out of place in Don's circle, and perhaps had sense enough to know it and not be desirous to "butt in," if she could help it,—no doubt the tool of her mother.

Lucy arose from the couch. She had seen her husband angry but once before, and then it was not like this. Now he trembled and was white.

"Oh, James, dear, dear James!" she pleaded, drawing his head to her shoulder. "Don't, don't! I know you think of me and my disappointment. But you mustn't,—you mustn't! All day my head has ached because my heart has ached so for you. I know how you have planned great things for Don. And, James dear (the mother heart rising above all else), you mustn't, you know,—you mustn't—if you do go—say harsh things to Don, —things that would hurt him. You have been so much to each other. Think how dreadful it would be if anything should separate you. And do you

know, James, Anne Carter took it so—so philosophically, perhaps she really does not love Don as I'd want him to be loved, you know."

The angry man took the clinging arms gently from his neck and sank into a chair, somewhat spent from his rage. Lucy noticed how gray and thin the hair about his temples was growing and how defined were the lines about eyes and mouth.

"I'll tell you, Lucy," his hands were still trembling a little as he stretched them out on the arms of the chair, "it's nothing but righteous indignation that I feel,—righteous indignation."

This term in his childhood Curtis had heard his Scotch grandmother use when she wished to justify one of her not infrequent outbursts of temper. Though the letter of it had been lost to him for years, the spirit had slumbered within him, tucked away somewhere perhaps in his ancient Scotch Covenanter blood, and now the words came bubbling forth.

Lucy recognized it, too, as a not unheard-of condition, and owned within herself that it was justifiable, no doubt. The boy was her idol as well as his father's, and after Curtis had left for his train she went into Don's room and sat for hours among his dear, dear belongings.

Curtis wondered why the baby's mother did not come. She certainly was an unconscionably long time about her morning toilet. He had heard the child, in a section just across from his own, crying in the night,—a plaintive, pathetic, apologetic little wail that—that somehow got on his nerves and made him bless his luck that fate could not have found another berth for that disagreeable infant—all infants were more or less disagreeable—than the one just opposite his own.

The baby was now lying on a pillow on the seat, wrapped up in a little blue shawl, a white veil thrown over its face. Curtis wondered what kept it from smothering under that veil in the stuffy air of the sleeper. The guardian of the baby was a young man,—a broad-shouldered chap, Curtis noticed, with crisp, light-brown hair, honest gray eyes and a figure—he saw when he stood up—that the fabled Apollo need not have blushed to own.

The porter came in just then, his ebon face breaking into a broad but sympathetic grin as he handed the young man a bottle of milk wrapped in a napkin. The young man took it, thanked the porter and tested its temperature by folding it closely between both hands. Finding it satisfac-

tory, he threw back the veil, and a greedy little mouth was ready for its breakfast.

"Huh!" Curtis ejaculated as he watched the proceedings. "Traveling alone with the youngster." And then he glanced about in genuine alarm. Alone in a sleeping-car, miles from anywhere, with a baby and only seven men and not a woman in sight! What might not happen before the next twenty-four hours had passed! Suppose it got to crying dreadfully, fearfully, and nobody to stop it!

Curtis fell to studying the young man with interest. A beardless youth he was,—about Don's age, he should judge, or maybe a little older. But he looked careworn, anxious, tired. He wondered if he had breakfasted; but he probably had, as the berth was not made up when he went to his own meal, and no doubt the baby was sleeping then.

In the mid forenoon the baby had refreshments again. It was a good little thing and had not whimpered all morning. Such a mite of humanity, Curtis soliloquized. Tiny pink hands, not much bigger than rose petals, now rested on the blue shawl coverlet. Curtis found himself wishing to see its face, the tiny chin being all that was visible from his position. He had never been on very

close and intimate terms with a baby. His own children in their infancy had seemed to him only bundles of lace and embroidery and ribbons to be handled only by Lucy and the nurses; occasionally, he recalled, he poked a finger at them that was caught and held by little warm, velvety bird-claws. But this recollection only increased his desire to see the face of the baby that a mere man ventured to travel alone with on a train going into the far west.

The train had come to a standstill, and the passengers, taking deep breaths,—as only sleeping car passengers at midday seem to take,—looked at their watches to see if the diversion of luncheon time was not approaching. Curtis, upon pretense of stretching his legs, took several turns up and and down the car.

"Good little thing," he said, pausing at the fourth turn and pointing to the baby.

"Yes," said the young man, glancing up from the magazine he was furtively reading.

"Girl or boy?" Curtis found himself asking with deep and absorbing interest, as though the Fates waited upon the answer.

"Girl," the young man replied.

Curtis sank into the seat at the end not occu-

pied by the pillow and peered into the flower-like face. Red-gold ringlets clustered about the lovely, delicate forehead, the eyebrows were as defined as though drawn with an artist's pencil, and the eyes were like purple pansies. Instinctively Curtis knew that this was an exceptionally beautiful child. He snuggled his finger down into the rose-petal hand, and immediately warm, velvety little bird-claws closed about it, as in the days of long ago. Such a funny, toothless little grin greeted him, and the little feet beneath the blue shawl began a lively jig. Curtis felt an irresistible impulse to peep at those feet. Out of the misty long-ago there came the remembrance that he had thought his babies' feet beautiful and wonderful little pads of pink velvet.

He wanted to ask about the child's mother but feared to; and, of course, as he reasoned, it was none of his business and it would be an impertinence to quiz a fellow traveler.

The young man regarded him with sympathetic eyes.

"A grandfather, I'll bet," he said to himself. "He seems to have a way with babies, like he was used to them."

"I'm taking her to her grandmother," the young

man volunteered, leaning over and adjusting the baby to a more comfortable position.

"So?" Curtis observed, drawing his finger away from the velvety bird-claws.

"Yes. Her mother died shortly after her birth."

Curtis noted that the voice was that of a man of refinement. He made no observation, but looked his interest.

"I tried to keep the child with me,—of course, I wanted to very much,—but I realized that for her own good the care that could only be hired was not enough." Then after a pause: "They—my wife's parents did not approve of her marriage to me."

"So?" again Curtis said, settling back in his seat and contemplating the splendid specimen of young manhood before him.

"No, they did not approve. They were ambitious for their daughter. I was poor, you know, had worked my way through college, and —I see it now—we really *should* have waited. But then—"

"Yes," said Curtis, as though completely understanding. That poor boy was heart-weary, and perhaps had had no one to sympathize with him.

"My wife was visiting in the east when we met."

There was a considerable pause.

"She had not finished school. She would have been graduated the next June. At first they thought—they thought, you know," and it seemed to wrench the young man's pride to admit it,—"they thought of annulling the marriage. They could have done so, I suppose, for the girl was not of age."

"So?" Curtis observed.

"Yes, sir," the young man said, almost humbly, or at least sadly, it sounded to the ear of the older man.

"They are not people of great wealth or position, but—and, I think naturally—they wanted their only daughter to do better,—in fact, had some one else already picked out for her. I had no family, name or position. My place in the world was all before me to make, sir. But I would have made it,—I will make it."

"I'll bank on that," Curtis observed mentally.

"They never forgave their daughter. But Amy said—"

"Amy?" Curtis interrupted, and sat up straight.

"Yes, sir," the young man answered, hesitated, and looked his surprise.

"Go on," he said, waving his hand in a characteristic gesture, but for a few moments heard little that was said.

"Amy," his thoughts ran, "Amy, a young girl and made unhappy by hard, unrelenting, unromantic old weather-beaten hearts! What a shame, what a shame! What an outrage! There was once another Amy, away at school, and one early summer day, trying her strength as a swimmer, she went down, down beneath the cruel water. When they brought her home to her mother, and to him, her father—but, pshaw! What was the use? God had never answered his question of "Why?" and never would. He had stormed the gates of heaven, but the heavens were of brass. His cry went not beyond the gates.

When he came back to the present and the young man, he glanced at the baby and saw she was asleep. For some time he sat and silently watched her, marveling at the wonder of nature's handiwork in fashioning the mortal form, and then he glanced at his watch. It was luncheon time. He arose without a word and started for the dining-car.

"I guess I must have stumbled on a tender spot with the old fellow," the young man mused, looking after him. "He didn't seem to hear a word I said after I mentioned that precious little name, 'Amy.' Suppose the iron has entered his soul, too, at some time in his life."

But he was not altogether correct in his surmise, for Curtis had heard him say that Amy,—still, quiet little Amy, never to tell those cruel ones that she forgave them,—had been sent home to them. And now, after a little time, traveling over the same route, he was following with Amy's daughter. If it were not for meddling presumptuously in family affairs, he'd advise that fine, splendid, manly young chap—good enough for any one's daughter—not to give those heartless old people the pleasure of having that beautiful baby.

Curtis, with a sense of righteous indignation again overwhelming him, ate a hurried luncheon. If more sentimental, quite as strong and persistent strings were drawing him back to the sleeping-car as ever made him swallow a meal and hurry back to "the street," and he entered the Pullman with as much interest and intensity of purpose as ever he carried into a directors' meeting. Not once did it occur to him that had a business acquaint-

ance loomed up as a looker-on, that he, James Curtis, a man of iron nerve, a wielder and welder of great affairs, and by no means noted as a sentimentalist, would have appeared in rather an amusing role.

He approached the section where the baby slept, almost on tiptoe.

"Now," he said, "you go and have your luncheon. I'll take care of her."

"Oh, sir, I'll ask the porter to keep an eye—"

"No, no, you go on," persisted Curtis. "And don't you hurry, either. We're going to stop here for some time, the conductor tells me,—something wrong ahead,—and you go out and walk up and down awhile, too. You need it."

Curtis laid an almost affectionate hand on the young man's shoulder as he arose.

"Now, mind, don't you hurry," he repeated, as he settled in the vacated seat.

"I guess he's used to children, sure enough," the young man thought, as he comfortably stretched his legs beneath the luncheon table.

Amy's blue eyes opened (Curtis had begun to call her Amy). She turned her head in his direction, and the funny, toothless little grin appeared again. Curtis—for the life of him he could not

resist it—leaned forward and scooped her up with both his big, strong hands. How light she was. How surprisingly easy it was to lift her up from the pillow! It almost startled him. He had expected something very much more weighty and unwieldy to hold. And there were no trailing yards of lace and embroidery to manipulate. Little Amy wore the more sensible modern shorter skirts, and on her tiny, energetic little feet were white and blue woollen bootees.

Out of the past came an imperious voice commanding him: "Hold her back!" Curtis did, and the hand that spread itself behind the wee form as he snuggled it to his shoulder was a broad enough brace for several backs as diminutive. Glancing about surreptitiously and discovering no one else in the car, he wrapped the blue shawl about the baby and began to pace up and down the aisle, humming the only tune he had ever mastered, "Go tell Aunt Becky the old gray goose is dead."

Finally, emboldened by success, Amy not having broken in two nor spilled like quicksilver in his grasp, he turned her over and snuggled her down in the bend of his arm. In this fashion he sat holding her in the seat, none having witnessed that triumphal march up and down the car.

"'Go tell Aunt Becky the old gray goose is dead.'"

"Good as gold," he reported, as Amy's natural protector returned, appearing much refreshed. He even ventured to deposit her on her pillow, accomplishing the feat like an old and experienced hand.

The porter came in just then with another bottle of milk. It would seem that Amy had a rapacious appetite, else "every two hours" came mighty close together on this particular journey. The milk disappeared with rapidity, and soon the golden lashes again rested on the downy cheeks.

"Been christened yet?" Curtis asked, preparing to return to his own section with a sense of duty well done.

"No, sir, not yet. I thought I'd wait to get her to her grandmother. You know how women are about such things."

Curtis nodded, as though most familiar with the details of all such events.

"What are you going to call her?"

"Well, of course, I'd like to call her for her mother,—Amy. But her grandmother may—"

"Look here, young man," Curtis could restrain himself no longer, "assert yourself in this, at least. Those adamantine old people are not going to have one word to say about the name of this baby! It's to be Amy, and nothing else!"

The young man smiled indulgently at the older man's vehemence.

"How long are you going to be in the west?"

"Only just as long as it is absolutely necessary. I cannot afford to be away from my work. I'm a civil and electrical engineer. Of course, I'd like to be near the child, but as yet I do not see my way clear to——"

"Well, you insist on the christening being done before you leave. And—and, if you don't mind, you know, I'd like mighty well to be godfather. I can't be there, but you select a proxy for me."

Curtis was now fumbling in an inner pocket. He brought forth a card, a folded blank check and a fountain pen. Then he went over to his bag and took out a packet of envelopes. Using these as a pad on his knee, he spread out the check and prepared to write.

"What is your name?" he asked.

With a half-amused smile at this odd sort of old chap, the young man handed him a card.

Curtis dated the check, wrote "5,000" behind the dollar mark and made it payable to Amy's father, remarking as he did so that he had not made it out to Miss Amy as she was not yet old enough to endorse it or to deposit it to her credit.

"There!" he said, sealing the envelope into which he had slipped it. "A little christening gift for my goddaughter, Amy. Open it the day she's christened,—not before, mind you. And here's my card. When you get ready to take a job in the west, let me know. I've got a big irrigation scheme going out there that I think needs a fellow like you."

The young man glanced at the card.

"James D. Curtis!" he fairly gasped.

Curtis, standing, smiled down on him paternally. He waved his hand laughingly.

"Oh, don't mention it young man, don't mention it. No thanks, if you please. Just good luck to you and my goddaughter Amy. And when she loses her heart to some fine young chap, be sure you know what you are about before you begin to an—"

But here Curtis abruptly stopped, remembering for the first time since early morning—it had been such a busy day he had even forgotten to smoke a cigar—the righteous indignation that had sent him whirling toward Colorado Springs, and the unpleasant task he had set himself to do.

. . . . . .

Some thirty-six hours later, from his hotel, he sent to New York the following message:

Donald's wife a lovely girl. We are to be congratulated upon gaining such a daughter. Be prepared to receive her with open arms. They are coming with me. Couldn't leave them behind a blessed minute.

Mrs. Curtis, reading the message for the second time, brushed the mist from her eyes, and passed her hand tenderly over a long and confidential letter received from the west that morning.

"I'm glad James did not say anything harsh to the dear boy. He seems so happy, but I know it would break his heart to have his father angry with him. I do believe Anne Carter's nature is rather cold, and Don is so—affectionate—like his father."

THE DISCIPLINARIANS

THE DISCIPLINARIANS

"When you have finished putting dinner on the table, Nora, go down to Mrs. Gordon's and bring Teddy home."

"Why don't you telephone?" questioned the head of the house from his end of the table.

"Because, Theodore," Lucy answered, with painstaking deliberateness, "it is dark, and I do not want the child to come alone along the street."

"He should have been home long before dark. Lucy, I cannot understand *why* you do not recognize the necessity of some sort of discipline where the child is concerned."

"So you just concluded remarking as we sat down to the table, Theodore," Lucy observed, sipping her soup loftily.

"Since his babyhood you have given me the impression that you considered it your prerogative to govern him. Now, why don't you *do* it? If you find it impossible, I'll take the matter in my own hands. I've heard you tell him at least half-a-dozen times to be in the house before dark!"

Lucy finished her soup in silence. She resented Theodore's manner of address, though in her mind she revolved the fact that Teddy really should be punished for such disobedience,—that he was growing decidedly wilful and headstrong. She would talk to him seriously after dinner.

"The child is a perfect law unto himself," Theodore went on.

"Much like his father," Lucy mentally commented, while Theodore had difficulty in restraining himself from adding, "the counterpart of his mother," as he put his soup-plate aside and began to carve the chicken.

In all the eleven years of their married life there had been no "first quarrel." But the portentous moment had perhaps arrived. Lucy felt an undefined sense of its imminence.

The slamming of the back door and a tuneless whistle announced Teddy's arrival before Nora had started on her way. A pause in the back hall while rubbers were kicked off, the whistle continuing. At the dining-room door the whistle ceased, and a chubby boy, just "turned nine," entered. His glorious bronze-tinted hair was towseled, his round little face pink and cool from the evening air.

"Hello!" he called bravely.

There was something ominous, hitherto unknown, unfelt, in the silence which greeted him. What was the matter with these chums, these

"What was the matter with these . . . willing slaves of his?"

adoring worshippers, these willing slaves of his? But the instinct that warns the young human creature to beware of rousing the ire of its elders prompted him to glance hastily from one parent to the other before venturing to speak again.

"Hullo!" he said again, this time with something of swaggering braggadocio.

His attention had been so often called to the neglect of his toilet that he began to pat down his hair as he approached the table. His appearance, perhaps, was the cause of the present strange and strained situation.

Eight grimy little fingers clutched the snowy edge of the table as he drew himself, with a vigorous propulsion of the body, into place.

"Teddy! Just look at those hands!"

Teddy lifted them and looked sheepishly, guiltily, at the offending members. Alas, eight gray, accusing marks glared up from the spotless damask upon which they had rested!

Lucy was about to command an immediate ablution, but from the opposite end of the table came a sterner voice.

"Leave the table immediately, sir!" commanded the male parent, pointing an accusing carving knife and brandishing the fork. Then an afterthought seized him. This was an excellent opportunity to teach both Lucy and Teddy a lesson.

"Go up-stairs, sir, and to your bed! If you cannot get in the house in time to make yourself

presentable to sit at the table, you'll go without your dinner!"

Teddy realized himself in a strange and new situation. There was no precedent to guide him. But he was not averse to novelty, and, having never had occasion to fear his parents, this new condition of affairs did not startle or wound him. Though hardly believing the evidence of his ears, he prepared to obey. Had he stopped to analyze he would have known that the sense of guilt that possessed him when he entered the dining-room was a premonition of the present happening. At any rate, his mood was to accept it as a matter of course and without questioning.

It was a sturdy, brave little back that he turned as he started for the door. Lucy thought so, and wanted to call him back and hug him, and Theodore felt much the same way. But this sign of fond and foolish weakness each would hide from the other.

Teddy marched straight on, without once glancing back.

"Don't light the gas in your room," Lucy called after him, "the light in the hall is enough."

"Yes'm," Teddy answered cheerily.

"And you get right into bed, sir," Theodore thundered. "No fooling around up there."

"All right, father," Teddy called back blithely from almost the top of the stairs.

But Theodore gave no evidence of being appeased or made remorseful by his son's cheerful acceptance of punishment.

Anger seethed and fomented in Lucy.

"The little darling!" she thought. "His heart will just be broken with such harsh treatment. I'll submit to it this once, but just let Theodore ever try it again! I'll take the child and leave the house first!"

Teddy started to whistle as he entered his room, but checked himself, as there was a dim hint from his inner consciousness that such nonchalance might not make a favorable impression below stairs at that moment. As a matter of fact, he was in a busy and happy frame of mind. Besides that, he was full to bursting with pop-corn and apples, so that going without dinner did not impress him as any great hardship.

Teddy sat down on a chair and lifted one foot preparatory to untying a shoe. It seemed so quiet and shadowy in the room. He did not believe he had even been in his room at that time of day,—

not since he was sick with measles, and that was a long, long time ago.

Twilight lingered about the windows; there was the sound of footsteps going along the pavement, and delivery wagons still clattered on their way. The busy sounds of day were not yet done.

Teddy was not sorry to be alone, to finish his "thinking," which had come to an end when he suddenly realized—but, alas! a little too late—that it was time to leave Alfy Gordon and the circus plans and scurry home.

"Crackies, but it'll be great if Fritzie Wunsch's father'll let us have the gray horse! Alfy said Fritzie said his father would. I'll be the ringmaster, first, Alfy said, an' then he'll be the ringmaster an' I'll do a bareback act."

Teddy untied his shoe, unlaced it and kicked it off so vigorously that it went under the bed. The other foot was lifted.

"I guess nobody'll care if we have it in the empty lot. The fence's so high nobody can see in, an' we'll stop up all the holes. Alfy said Fritzie said his father'd let us have some hay to make the ring with. Crackies!"

Teddy disrobed down to his underwear. Then he sat for sometime lost in thought, until, grow-

ing somewhat chilly, he bethought him of bed. Jerking down a corner of the covers he jumped in, both sheets beneath him and the dainty white counterpane above him. He would not bother about pajamas. Since his mother was not coming to see him to bed it did not matter. He began to wonder why he had not seen before how much easier it was to get into bed with his underclothes on than it was to change to pajamas. A fellow learns lots of things when he is allowed to go it independently.

Very pleasant were Teddy's thoughts as he lay flat on his back staring into the dim room. Presently the street beneath his window grew silent, his plans for the coming circus became confused, until in a moment they burst into full realization in that magic land, the Island of Dreams, where moved a most brilliant, full-panoplied, glittering circus with three rings,—Teddy riding bareback a sleek white horse with scarlet reins and tinkling bells, and Fritzie Wunsch and Alfy swinging from trapezes overhead!

Meanwhile, below stairs, dessert had been brought in. Lucy ate the creamy rice pudding slowly, remembering as she picked up each plump raisin how fond Teddy was of them. She could

not remember having eaten plump raisins from rice pudding for years. They were always handed over to Teddy. Theodore's thoughts ran in the same channel. The plump raisins were a novelty to his palate, also.

After dinner Lucy went to the library and picked up her embroidery. Theodore followed, took the evening paper from the table and lighted a cigar. Thus was the evening programme initiated, according to custom. But Teddy's own particular little chair was vacant, and his small desk in the corner, where he was accustomed to sit and make a pretense of studying or writing, was closed.

Lucy lifted her eyes from her embroidery to survey her reflection in the long mirror between the windows. What she saw there did not displease her. Her white dress—Lucy always wore a fluffy white dress about the house—was most becoming. Her dark hair was neatly done, with just enough wave and ripple to banish severity. She saw that there was a deeper color than usual in her cheeks, and if Theodore had been looking up from his paper he would have encountered an unaccustomed flash from her eyes as she glanced in his direction and then down at her embroidery.

"A monotonous way to spend evening after

evening!" Lucy thought scornfully. "Good enough for an old woman, but I'm not—"

Lucy glanced again toward the mirror, and then plied her needle viciously.

"I simply hate cigar smoke!" In the first year of their marriage she had told Theodore that she "just loved" it, and he had never thought to inquire since if it were agreeable to her or not.

"I do believe Theodore'd be glad to see me knitting the family stockings,—just so I'd be everlastingly playing the *hausfrau* when he is at home. Just think! I do not belong to even one single club; I believe I've lost all individuality. I'm simply going out more,—entertain more."

Lucy's thoughts ran on and on. Almost she reached the stage where she determined that she was a very unhappy wife, that Theodore was growing to be a regular brute, that she was going to pack up and go back to her own people.

Theodore smoked on, ostensibly reading his paper. But he and Lucy exchanged no comment about the news of the day, and the corner where a restless, explosive little body always sat after dinner was obtrusively still.

Theodore put down his paper, went over to a bookcase and opened a lower drawer. Lucy knew

that this was preparatory to certain photographic operations, usually much discussed before further procedure than merely taking materials from the bookcase drawer. But now Theodore went silently about his task. Finally he disappeared, going to the back part of the house. The closet under the back stairway had been fitted up as a "dark room" and the kitchen sink supplied a place for the "baths." Very often Theodore vibrated between "dark room" and sink in the evenings, whistling cheerily as he went about his hobby. But to-night he did not whistle,—at least, not for some time, and then he whistled more energetically than usual.

"That poor little dear up-stairs without any supper!" Lucy thought indignantly. "I wouldn't be at all surprised if he was very ill before morning. He's probably up there now crying himself into a fever. He's so tender-hearted. I do not know what has come over Theodore any way! As soon as he is finished in the kitchen with—with that photographic foolishness—I'll slip in there and fix a nice little supper for Teddy. I don't want openly to defy Theodore,—not this time. I suppose if he catches me I'll never hear the end of it. He seems to want to make a glowing

example of his punishment this evening,—a sort of warning for future reference."

Finally Theodore began to whistle, and the water in the kitchen sink to splash more noisily than usual.

"Poor little chap!" Theodore was saying to himself as he moved about the mystery of kitchen cupboards under cover of the noise of running and splashing water. "I'm going to take him up some milk and chicken, and things. He must be hungry. I'll tell him not to say anything to his mother about it,—I want to teach her a lesson. I don't want the youngster to go hungry all night, and perhaps not sleep."

Theodore could not find a tray, or, perhaps, did not think of looking for one.

On a big plate he heaped slices of chicken,—put away in the ice box by the careful Nora,—bread and butter, rice pudding in a saucer, and a glass of milk. All of this he set on a lower step of the back stairs.

"There now! When I've finished in the 'dark room' I'll just slip up the back way with 'em. Lucy'll probably wait in the library for me, and if I leave the water running she'll think I'm still busy."

Lucy yawned a little over her embroidery. She thought she would outlinger Theodore, and that he would go up to his room without saying good-night—as they were hardly on "speaking terms,"—and she would fix things and go to Teddy.

Once Theodore tiptoed to peep in the library door; but Lucy was still sitting by the table, so he returned to the "dark room."

If discovered in the kitchen Lucy knew Theodore would think her busy about some household concern, so she made the venture, getting together such things as she thought would make a proper late meal for Teddy. To the library she brought the tray, waiting for a few moments to see what Theodore's movements would be. The water was still running; no doubt he would be occupied for some time. Lucy gathered up the tray and ascended the front stairs.

Teddy's barque had come sailing back from the Island of Dreams. The three-ring circus was left behind, but he had gathered new inspiration for Saturday plans. He was all a-tingle with the glow of it.

"Crackies, but it's still! Must be 'bout near mornin'."

Teddy sat straight up in bed. No, it couldn't be so late. The light was still burning in the hall, and his mother always put that out before she went to bed and left one in the bathroom. Then Teddy realized that he was hungry. Apples and popcorn consumed at five o'clock in the afternoon may be filling, but they are not sustaining.

What was that? The clicking of dishes,—yes, it sounded as though some one were coming upstairs with dishes. Teddy recalled at the instant the events of the earlier night. Perhaps it was Nora bringing him something to eat. Nora was always good to him, and called him "dear lamb" with particular fervor and sympathy whenever he was scolded; and up to date Teddy had known no harsher punishment from his guardians. But he did not feel any resentment. He only hoped it was his unfailing friend, Nora, with a glass of milk and perhaps a cookie or two.

But there were voices in the hall. His mother's and his father's,—certainly.

"Oh, Theodore!" his mother exclaimed, and his father answered, "Lucy!" as though they were very glad, or very surprised, to see each other. And there was a rattling as though many dishes had been set suddenly down on the little table in

the hall. And—yes, it sounded just as though his mother was crying.

"I've been so, so unhappy all evening, Theodore!" Teddy heard her say.

"And so have I, Lucy," Theodore answered comfortingly.

Then they both laughed a little mixed, smothered sort of laugh, and, though Teddy did not see it, they looked at each other sheepishly.

"I thought the poor little chap might be hungry," Theodore confessed, looking at his pile of deposited dishes.

"And so did I, the poor little darling!" Lucy added.

"Ah, ha!" thought Teddy. "They're sorry they sent me to bed 'thout any dinner!" And he snuggled down, determined to play fast asleep, and make out when they awakened him that he was too utterly miserable to touch a mouthful.

But Teddy was too hungry to carry out either of these ideas, and too teeming with happiness regarding circus plans to assume dolefulness. Let the world wag as it would, just so Saturday came on swift wings!

"You'd better take it in, Lucy," Theodore was saying as Teddy again pricked up his ears. "It's

always better for a boy to know his mother gives in than his father. They always expect it of mothers, any way. I'll pretend I'm still displeased. Just for the sake of—discipline, you know."

Lucy needed no second bidding.

"Are you asleep, dear?" she said as she pushed open the door.

"No'm," Teddy answered cheerily.

Lucy put the tray down on a chair and lighted the gas. She would have screamed with laughter at the sight that met her gaze except that mothers' hearts incline to feel more sorrow than amusement at the tragic result of even a few hours' neglect of a small boy.

Teddy sat bolt upright, blinking at the sudden illumination. His wavy locks were tumbled and his face streaked where his grimy little fingers had wandered in his sleep. The white counterpane showed unmistakably where he had clutched it. One shoe was on the bed, and both stockings. Apprehensively he thought about the neglected pajamas.

Lucy put the tray on his knees and a big bath-towel about his shoulders. She brought a wet cloth and wiped off his hands. Such ministra-

tions were very comforting. He had not been so waited upon at mealtime since he had the measles, he remembered.

"Thanks, mother," Teddy said at the first mouthful of rice pudding, which he selected as the first course. Then he sang out:

"Father! Oh, I say, father, come here!"

But there was no answer. Theodore's determination to be stern still held. But Teddy ignored the silence with which his call was greeted. He knew his father was near and must have heard.

"Oh, pop,—say, pop, come here. I got somepin to ask you 'bout."

The big man came obediently to the door, but frowning ominously. This Teddy passed over as though it were not. Theodore looked at the funny little besmudged face.

"Say, pop," Teddy went on, "me 'n Alfy Gordon and Fritzie Wunsch's goin' to have a circus Sat'day. Fritzie Wunsch's the groc'ry man's little boy, you know,—and Fritzie says his father'll lend us the big gray horse they drive in the deliv'ry wagon,—an', say, pop, I'm going to be ring-master! Lend me your ridin' whip, pop? Won't you, pop?"

Lucy and Theodore exchanged glances. There

was a twinkle in their eyes, but something very much like tears in Lucy's.

Had the discipline missed its aim? their eyes asked of each other. And upon whom had the punishment fallen? Theodore took Lucy's hand and gave it a loving little squeeze as he sat down beside her on the foot of Teddy's bed.

CONSTANCE

CONSTANCE

THE RECORD OF A FRIENDSHIP

It was twilight, and raining, when I reached the doorstep of the big, old-fashioned apartment house, and Constance stood in the vestibule.

She looked out through the plate-glass doors upon the gray and dismal street where the lights had not begun to twinkle, and wrapped her doll's cloak more closely about her.

"It is a dull evening," I observed, shutting my umbrella.

"Yes," it is," answered Constance, "and quite chilly. Bertha May has a cold."

"Indeed?" I remarked, glancing at the doll. "You are quite right, then to keep her wrapped up. These autumn evenings are bad for one susceptible to cold."

Constance gave me an appreciative look. At once I had accepted Bertha May as a living personality.

"What is your name?" I asked.

Constance.

The slim little girl with long legs and big brown eyes answered me:

"Constance."

I went my way up the three flights of unlighted steps. The autumn twilight rested heavy over my rooms, but I did not light the lamp at once, hurriedly to banish the gloom, as was my custom. The thought of Constance standing in the vestibule lifted some of the grayness,—Constance, the child with imagination who had taken me into her confidence.

The long autumn and the longer winter were stretching before me. Cares had pressed heavily and might press more heavily. The big city has a heart, but it is hard to find and harder to win. There had been lonely days and there might be lonelier. To banish the creeping fear of these I made the rooms bright and settled to my tasks.

It was twilight again the next day when I came to the doorstep, and again Constance stood in the vestibule and looked out through the plate-glass doors. It was not raining now, and other children played on the pavement, hair blowing as freely in the crisp wind as the few withered leaves that were hurtled along from the solitary tree at the corner.

Constance greeted me with her slow, mysterious smile. My heart gave a glad little bound. Had she waited there for me? She came out of the shadows as though a part of them.

"How is Bertha May?" I asked anxiously.

"She is somewhat better to-day, thank you," Constance smiled gravely.

"You do not think she has a fever?" I asked concernedly, scrutinizing Bertha May's round and ruddy cheeks.

"Oh, no," Constance answered emphatically; and then, as though thoroughly to allay any fears I might have, added, "she always has a great deal of color."

The three flights of stairs seemed shorter to-night than ever before and there was not an oppressive grey shadow waiting to greet me in the rooms. I sang a little as I lighted the lamp and thought of Constance standing in the vestibule.

And this was the beginning of our friendship.

The next afternoon at half-past five precisely Constance called. She brought with her Bertha May. Perhaps she had waited for me, and failing to see me pass had sought my door. How she knew which it was did not then puzzle me. It

seemed quite natural to find her at my threshold, as though it were a thing I had long expected.

"I have come to see you," she said simply.

I assured her of a welcome, and led the way to the room where the fire burned and the cat dozed and the books were.

Constance did not glance about with curiosity. She at once found her place and took it,—a foot-stool at the chimney side. Bertha May she settled on the floor beside her, leaning her back against the wall.

Bertha May was in festive attire,—a lace-trimmed white dress, with a rose-colored cape. I was sure Constance had chosen this costume to banish the depressing thought of illness and re-assure me of Bertha May's well-being.

"I see," I remarked promptly, "that Bertha May has quite recovered her health and spirits."

"Yes," said Constance, "she is quite well again, and I am so relieved."

And here she sighed deeply. No doubt Bertha May's illness had borne heavily on her heart while it lasted.

The cat arose, stretched herself and went over to Constance, rubbing against her knee. Then she returned to her place satisfied, and again went to

sleep. Constance had regarded her with that world-old smile, and the world-old light had come to her eyes that I had seen when she had first greeted me in the vestibule. Some things might surprise her but nothing would ever be wholly strange.

Constance sat with folded hands, but I had no disturbing thought concerning that. If she desired occupation I was certain she would find the room abounding in channels. Already, no doubt, it was teeming with a thousand possibilities. I had work to do and settled to it. Words were not needed to explain the situation to my visitor.

Presently Constance went to the bookcase, scanning titles closely, and then chose a book of poems. With oval chin cupped in one hand and a bony, brown little elbow resting on her knee, she read steadily and silently for an hour. Then she glanced at the clock, put the book carefully away in its place, gathered up Bertha May, and, after glancing in my direction and finding me apparently deeply engrossed, went silently out of the room and into the hall.

I knew not whether she went up-stairs or down, for the heavy carpet muffled such light footfalls as hers, nor did I wish to know. To have been

curious to know whether Constance lived on the second or the fourth floor would have been to be a materialist, and unworthy the friendship of Constance.

Every evening out of the shadows Constance came to the door. Sometimes we sat silently during the hour of her visit, and at other times we found things of mutual interest, like invading the piece bag and spreading out most wonderful lengths of lace, ribbons, silks and ginghams for the adorning of Bertha May. And then there were other evenings when Constance's thimble flashed, and so did mine, in fashioning garments for Bertha May. But the times when we were happiest were when we browsed among the books or talked of the strange and unfathomable things of life and living. Seldom did I feel moved to talk "down" to Constance. Sometimes she only met me half-way, but always it was at least half-way. Never did she fail to meet me entirely.

One evening a belated butterfly rested on the window-sill and then fluttered into the room, attracted by the warmth and light. Constance picked it up and touched its wings with fingers as light as thistledown.

"It is strange," she said, in her low, vibrating

voice, "that such a beautiful thing can come from one of those ugly worms that spin cocoons about themselves."

"Yes," I said, "it is like the soul,—the soul that is always beautiful when looked at apart from the body. I do not mean the soul that is supposed to be released after the body is dead, but the soul as it is in the living body; for no matter how ugly the body, the soul is there, ready to come forth shining at the sound of a tender word, maybe, and always ready to whisper of good and beautiful things, for the soul is of God and cannot know wicked or unlovely things. It is always bright and lovely and shining, just as God made it, if we will only give it a chance to be those things."

Constance looked at me with the world-old light in her eyes, and I am sure that she comprehended, for she nodded her head, and half-whispered under her breath:

"That is so."

She glanced in a moment at the open window, beyond which was the darkness and the chill of coming night, and then at the fire in the grate that sent its beam of light across the rug, and to this she turned, putting the butterfly down in the warmth.

There, with its poor battered wings, it was content to rest.

Then I pondered the child sitting on the footstool. How old was she? Less than ten, she must be, for she had not yet come to the age of self-consciousness, and her doll was still a thing that needed sleep and proper clothing.

Always Constance came out of the shadows at half-past five and always she went at half-past six. If I spent the evening out, I left a note pinned to the door to tell her so, and peered anxiously, and with quick-beating heart, upon my return to see if it had been taken. And never once did it fail to be gone, which made me know that Constance had not forgot me that day.

Sometimes there were callers when Constance came with the twilight on Sundays, and always I feared that some one in stupid grown-up fashion would ask her, "Constance what?" But they did not. The one name seemed satisfying. And once I ran from the room when I feared a stout lady, who always wears black lace with shrimp-pink on Sunday evenings and is interested in charity kindergartens, would ask where she lived and who were her parents, and I was glad when I returned

to find that Constance had not vanished into thin air through the asking of questions that would "break the charm," but found her sitting quietly on her footstool with Bertha May at her side and the cat dozing and blinking on the opposite side of the hearth.

And the winter was wearing away. The work that had been planned had gone forward unfalteringly, the dreaded emptiness of mere effort and material reward had not been, and the twilight was not now quite so deep in my rooms when Constance came at half-past five.

But one evening when I answered a faint ring at my door she paused on the threshold, as though not meaning to come further, Bertha May clutched close to her bosom.

"I have come to say good-bye." And a slim little brown hand was thrust out to me from the shadows.

"Constance!" I gasped. But Constance's vibrating voice was low and steady.

"I have come to say good-bye," she repeated. "I am going away."

"Away,—far away?" I almost cried.

"Out of the city," she replied. "But I shall never forget you."

She did not raise her face in child-fashion to be kissed, but again stretched out her hand.

"No, Constance, you will not forget me. We may never meet again in life,—it is probable that we never shall, but some far day when two look into each other's eyes and recognize there a friendship that needs no words of declaration to awaken or to hold,—in those eyes, Constance, I shall again behold you and you will behold me; but only the winds and the waves and everlasting things will know.